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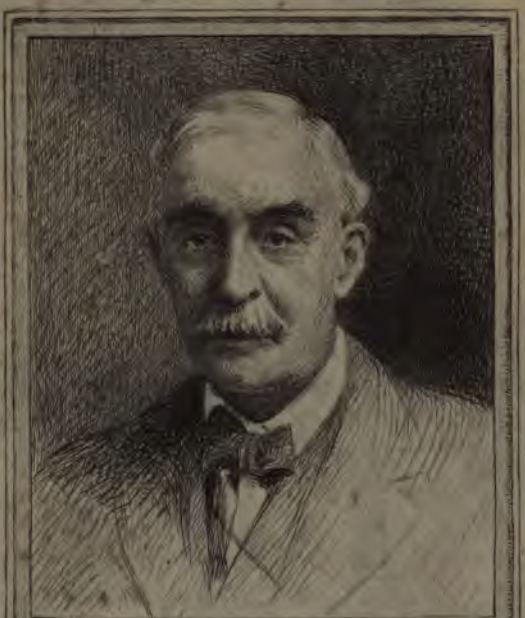

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CAN THE OLD FAITH LIVE WITH THE NEW?

CAN THE OLD FAITH LIVE WITH THE NEW?

OR

THE PROBLEM OF EVOLUTION AND REVELATION

BY THE

REV. GEORGE MATHESON, M.A., D.D.

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EDINBURGH AND LONDON
MDCCCLXXXV

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1-17-38
5-20-38. WMS

PREFACE.

OUR object in this volume is to consider the relation of the modern doctrine of Evolution to those doctrines of the Bible which bear on the development of the world; and as natural evolution is supposed to involve religious agnosticism, we have prefaced the inquiry by considering the scientific value of the religious sentiment in general. The chapters are not a series of disconnected studies, but are arranged on a principle of development, and therefore they cannot be read out of their natural order.

There are two important books which have stimulated us to make this attempt—that of Mr Joseph John Murphy on 'The Scientific Bases of Faith,' and that of Professor H. Drummond on 'Natural Law in the Spiritual World.' Our design, however, is

not identical with that of either of these works. Both of these are in their nature constructive; their aim is to build a faith on the acceptance of the modern doctrine of Evolution. Our purpose, on the other hand, is purely analytic. We have nowhere desired to express any opinion as to the scientific evidence for that doctrine; our sole design has been to inquire if the doctrine be true, What then? With this view we have placed it side by side with those doctrines of revelation which seem to come into contact with it, and have sought impartially to consider the question, How the adoption of the former would affect our acceptance of the latter.

In considering the scientific relations of the different religious doctrines, we have confined ourselves rigidly to those points in which revelation appears to come into contact with *Evolution.* There are many questions between science and revelation which are not questions between Evolution and revelation. The relation, for example, of the six days of Genesis to the progressive periods of geology may be a question between science and revelation, but it is not a question of Evolution: it would still remain to be solved even though the modern doctrine of Evolution were disproved; it

exists for the creationist as much as for the Darwinian. Evolution relates to the particular mode in which things became what they are, and it is in this light purely that we have viewed the subject. We have only to add that, as we have mentioned few names, we have made use of few references, our object having been not to seek recondite facts, but to avail ourselves only of those which have obtained universal currency.

G. M.

MANSE, INNELLAN, 1885.

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CAN THE OLD FAITH LIVE WITH THE NEW?

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

OUR design in the present treatise is to endeavour to ascertain to what extent the speculations of modern thought would, if proved to be true, affect the fundamental articles of religious belief. Our subject is therefore not the establishment of a thesis but the institution of an inquiry. Our aim is not either to prove or to disprove anything. We have simply recognised the fact that the spirit of the nineteenth century has led men to certain views of mind and nature which are very different from those entertained by their fathers; and without inquiring whether they or their fathers have occupied the right side of the question, we have set ourselves, if possible, to determine the influence

of these opinions on the religious sentiments in which we have been nurtured.

It will be seen that the position here taken is an intermediate, to some extent a neutral, one. There have been two extreme attitudes in which faith has stood to science—that of antagonism and that of alliance. There are some who have looked upon the page of revelation as a final sentence against the doctrine of Evolution; there are others who have looked upon it as itself an anticipation and forewarning of the truth of that doctrine. We do not ourselves hold either of these views. We do not believe that when the writer of the Book of Genesis attributed to God the act of creation, he had in his mind any comparison whatever between creating and evolving, and therefore we refuse to see in the doctrine of that Book either an anticipative refutation or an anticipative corroboration of the doctrine of Evolution. But when all this is said, there remains another and an intermediate question, which, alike from the side of religion and of science, is a legitimate subject of inquiry. We may refuse to believe that the old culture was in any conscious sense an anticipation of the new, and still we may ask the question, Will the new culture lend itself to the old? Is it possible, on the one hand, that the ancient faith may be expressed in terms of modern thought, and on the other, that modern thought may be expressed in

terms of the ancient faith? Let it be observed that such an inquiry is at all times legitimate, and is by no means limited to the sphere of Christian theology. No one, for example, would for a moment maintain that Confucianism was a designed anticipation of the institutions of modern culture. Yet there may occur circumstances in which it may be the interest of modern culture to ask whether her institutions can take root on the basis of the Confucian system, whether the results of modern civilisation can find a possible meeting-place in any caste of thought indigenous to the Chinese soil. It is not too much to say that the discovery of such a meeting-place, so far from being regarded by modern culture as a detraction from her own dignity, would be hailed by her with the most lively enthusiasm. Alike in the field of missionary enterprise and in the field of secular education, the discovery of a point of contact between the most recent and the most antique civilisation which the world has beheld, would be greeted as a pioneer of progress and a promise of future development.

Is there, then, any *a priori* probability that such a meeting-place should be found between the old culture and the new? At a first glance it would seem as if such a hope were precluded by a simple study of the records of the past. The original impression made on every student of history is a

sense of the utter transitoriness of the thoughts and the systems of men. The civilisations of the past seem to succeed one another in no other relations than those of destroyer and destroyed. Each new system of culture is to all outward appearance built on the spot left vacant by the removal of its predecessor, and the feet of those who carried out its predecessor are already seen waiting at the door to carry it out also. In a floating panorama such as this,—a panorama which appears to consist only of shifting scenes without causal sequence and without mutual interdependence,—it is hard to see where room can be found for any contact between the future and the past. If the history of previous systems has been simply the history of successive revolutionary changes in the thoughts of men, what reason have we to suppose that the system which we now call modern shall manifest any greater continuity with the products of other days?

And if, indeed, the apparent picture were the real one, there could exist no reason for such a hope; there is no reason whatever to believe that the culture of the nineteenth century possesses any exceptional element which puts it beyond comparison with previous cultures. Is the picture, however, of these previous cultures what it has been represented to be? Do we find on examination that the civilisation of one period has dis-

placed the civilisation of another by the process of abolition? On the contrary, the slightest scrutiny of human annals makes it apparent that, in every case, the displacement has been effected not by abolition but by transmutation, — that the new system has taken the place of the old not by rooting out the old, but simply by transplanting it. To make this clear, let us take one or two representative instances.

One of the earliest and most extensive modifications of human culture exhibited by the history of man is that embraced in the transition from the creed of the Brahman to the doctrine of the Buddhist. At first sight it would seem as if that transition had involved a complete and radical revolution—a revolution in which the old faith was entirely obliterated, and a new faith, or rather an absence of faith, substituted in its room. Yet a deeper study will show us that Buddhism never contemplated any such revolution. Buddha, like Confucius, appeared not as an innovator but as a reformer. He did not propose to break with the past; what he desired was, to give a philosophic meaning to the dogmas of the past, to represent in the world of spirit that which up to his time had only been symbolised in the world of matter. He found a belief current in his age and country that the souls of men who had conquered their worldly lusts would be absorbed at death in the Life of the

Universe. So far from contradicting that belief, he said that it erred not by excess but by defect. He declared that the hope held out by Brahmanism of emancipation from individual care, so far from being a delusive hope, was not expressed with sufficient emphasis. The Brahman had contented himself with saying that a redemption from individual care might come in the future world; Buddha announced that such a redemption might be reached now and here. He told his countrymen that they had been taught by Brahmanism to look not for too much but for too little; that they did not need to wait for the loosing of the silver cord in order to find rest; that they might enter into rest in the very heart of the present scene of things, and in the midst of the world of life might obtain the Nirvana of peace.[1] He told them that the true death for the spirit of man was the death of self, the surrender of individual desire, the giving up of the anxious longing for seen and perishable things. Here was a new civilisation, yet it was a novelty reached purely by the transmutation of the old—a civilisation which had indeed constructed a completely different edifice, but which had constructed it by transposing and recombining the elements of that edifice which it

[1] See T. Y. R. David's 'Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religion, as illustrated by some points in the History of Indian Buddhism,' Appendix X., p. 253.

had destroyed. Buddhism was not the annihilation of Brahmanism. It did not build itself upon the ruins of the ancient system; rather did it carry that system up to the summit of the mount and transfigure it there. It built a new tabernacle, but it built it out of old materials—those very materials which had been furnished by the life of that age which it came to supplant.

The second representative instance we shall select is the transition from Judaism into Christianity. We believe Christianity to have been the introduction of a new moral and spiritual force into this world, the introduction of a force which conferred upon humanity a new power for living a moral and a spiritual life. To this extent, therefore, we hold Christianity to have been an innovation on the old order of things. But the innovation lay purely in the newness of the method, not in the newness of the work to be done. Christianity by its own admission did not come to teach men a new morality; almost the initial words of its Divine Founder are these: "Think not I am come to destroy the law." So far from having come to destroy the morality of Judaism, Christianity declared that its mission was to intensify the range of that morality, to fulfil that which from its weakness it could not itself do. The force which lay in Judaism was not sufficient to accomplish its own aspirations; Christianity brought

a new force to its aid to overtake the old things.

Accordingly, as we pass from the Jewish to the Christian dispensation we are struck with a fact somewhat analogous to that observed in the transition from Brahmanism to Buddhism. We see that we have entered into a different circle of ideas, but we are at the same time made aware that the difference has been reached not by destruction but by transmutation. The leading ideas of Christianity are renewals of the leading ideas of Judaism. If Christianity destroys Judaism, it is only on the principle that where the perfect has come the partial is done away; it destroys it by absorbing its separate night-lights in one common blaze of day. Christianity has united two ideas which in Judaism are not only separate but contradictory —the idea of kinghood and the thought of sacrifice. In the Judaic polity these ideas never did coalesce; the one was the antithesis of the other. There were cases, indeed, in which the offices of the priest and of the king were combined in one person, but even then there was no amalgamation. The same person might be both priest and king, but he could not be both priest and king at the same moment. And the reason is plain. In Judaism priesthood and kinghood denoted two opposite states of mind: priesthood was the mark of humility, kinghood was the badge of independ-

ence. Accordingly, in Judaism the ruler could only become a priest by ceasing for the moment to rule, and the priest could only become a ruler by ceasing for the moment to sacrifice. The acts might be combined in one life, but they were only combined as any number of inconsistencies may be united in the person of a single man. But when Christianity came, it not only retained these two ideas—it abolished their differences, it joined together what man had put asunder. The idea of priesthood and the idea of kinghood ceased to denote two opposite mental attitudes; they became merely different sides of one thought—the headship of Christ. Here the priest and the king met together. The Head of the body was king over the members just because He was the real sufferer in all that the members bore, and He was the real sufferer in all that the members bore just because He was the Head of the body. In this strange and subtle thought, borrowed from the constitution of the physical frame, Christianity joined together in one idea what in all the systems of antiquity had been separate and contradictory elements. It united the conception of sacrifice with the conception of royalty, and out of their union it evoked a new idea—the empire of sacrificial service. The combination was as new in its result as is the result produced by the combination of oxygen and hydrogen, yet equally in the one

case as in the other, the newness has been reached by the incorporation of elements already existing in the previous state of things.

We shall take one more example of the relation which, in the course of human history, the new culture habitually bears to the old. In one sense no two states of civilisation can be more opposed to one another than Mediævalism and Paganism. Theoretically, the former is the antithesis of the latter, and came to supersede it. Yet it is none the less certain that the temple of Mediævalism is supported by two pillars which had their origin in Pagan culture. Mediævalism is professedly a survival of the Roman Empire, and the Roman Empire, in its Christianised form, preserved essentially all the characteristics of its Pagan condition. Now the Roman emperor in his days of Paganism united in himself two functions, in both of which he was esteemed an object of reverence; he was the ruler of the state and he was the head of religion—the chief Consul and the Pontifex Maximus. In both of these attitudes the emperor was deemed sacred. Hence it was that in the system of Roman Paganism, Church and State were one. There was no real distinction between the political and the religious, between treason and impiety, between heresy and crime. Around the idea of the state there circled two conceptions — the thought of religious sanctity and the thought of

political power. Yet in their nature and in their aim these two were one; the religious sanctity was political, and the political power was religious.

Now this was precisely the thought which Mediævalism appropriated. The idea of Mediæval government, so far from being detached from the culture of the past, was essentially based on past culture. That government in a slightly modified form revived the conception of Roman Imperialism. Here, as in the older civilisation, Church and State were again one. Here, again, the civil power comprehended two functions—the one political, the other ecclesiastical. The difference lay in the fact that in Mediævalism the two functions no longer belonged to the same person. A nominal division was made between the province of the secular and the province of the sacred, and each was assigned to its own representative; the former was symbolised in the emperor, the latter was incarnated in the pope. We say a *nominal* division, for the most superficial study makes it evident that the recognition of two heads instead of one made no real separation between the secular and the sacred. The emperor was nominally the ruler of the State, but he claimed, by inheritance from his Roman ancestors, a headship over the Church as well; the State was to him identical with the Church. The pope was nominally ruler of the Church, but, in virtue of that very fact, he

claimed a headship over the State also; the Church was to him identical with the State. The whole fabric was, in short, the reproduction of an older culture. Mediævalism constructed her government upon no ideal or utopian model. She did not build her structure out of fancy, but reared it out of past experience. The Renaissance which came at the close of Mediævalism has been called a revival of Pagan civilisation, but in truth it only intensified the effort at which Mediævalism aimed. The aim of that civilisation had all along been regressive, and the Renaissance only put the finishing touch to the process by which the Europe of the Middle Ages strove to reunite itself to the secularism of the first Christian century.

We have taken these three specimens not as marking abnormal aspects of culture but as representative of the course which we believe all culture to have followed in every age. It would have been as easy to have produced fifty specimens as three; indeed we are acquainted with no past civilisation which would not yield the same result. In our selection of these particular specimens we have been guided by the fact that each of them exhibits a distinct form of culture. The transition from Brahmanism to Buddhism, the transition from Judaism to Christianity, and the transition from Paganism to Mediævalism, are each separate in-

stances exhibiting few analogies in their conditions and circumstances. Yet in each of these instances the result has been the same. The new form of culture, coming under the guise of revolution, has really erected itself on the basis of the old, and has effected its conquest over the minds of men not by obliterating but by transmuting the labours of its predecessor.

Now what is the relevancy of such a study to the subject we have in hand? It clearly lies in the fact that the considerations here advanced are fitted to remove a preliminary prejudice to the investigation of that subject. It is a very popular notion that every attempt to reconcile the culture of our age with the faith of past ages is in its very nature a recoil from the spirit of the age. If it be so, we can only come to one conclusion—that there must be an essential difference between the spirit of the nineteenth century and the spirit of every other century and epoch that the world has known. In all previous periods of human history, the first aim of the spirit of every age was to unite itself to the culture of the past; and the compliance with that tendency, so far from being a sign of recoil, was an indication of sympathy with contemporaneous movements. Is there anything in the circumstances of the nineteenth century which should reverse our judgment on this matter? Is there any cause which in the nature

of things should render the culture of our age more revolutionary than the culture of its predecessors? If there be such a cause, it is only fair that it should be stated and examined. The mere fact that other periods have followed a different law, will of itself give no warrant for holding that the nineteenth century is bound to be reconciliatory to the faith of other centuries. But, on the other hand, it must be shown that there is ground for such a difference. It must be shown that the nineteenth century has more right to be revolutionary than preceding epochs. There is only one ground on which such a right could be established. If it could be proved that our age has arrived at any new discovery which is fitted to revolutionise the beliefs of past ages, our modern life would then legitimately occupy a quite exceptional position in the history of culture. It would have a right to consider itself in the light of a new departure. It would have a claim to regard itself as standing on the boundary line between two worlds. It would be entitled to present to each of these worlds a different front. To the world of the future it would rightly offer the hand of alliance, for it would see in itself the pioneer and prophet of the coming age. To the world of the past, on the other hand, it would with equal propriety present the front of antagonism, for it would see in that world the accumulated result of ages

of error which the advent of its own light would be commissioned to dispel.

All this, we say, would be the legitimate conclusion from the fact that the nineteenth century had made any discovery in the field of nature which was fitted to exert a modifying tendency on old beliefs. Now it is precisely on this ground that the present age has been tempted to assume an antagonistic attitude towards the result of past ages. It believes itself to be in possession of a view of nature which past ages had not. It looks upon itself as the repository of a secret which was hid from its predecessors—a secret whose divulgence is calculated to render nugatory all that these predecessors have thought. It would be a great mistake to imagine that the belief of our age in the possession of this secret is to it uniformly a source of joy. It is not too much to say that in the large majority of cases it is fraught with the deepest pain. With all the optimism that prevails in the minds of some scientists, there is no reason to question the fact that the radical revolt from the faith of the past is at best contemplated only as a painful necessity. There are probably few men of those who believe themselves to be in possession of a revolutionary secret, who do not at times cast back a wistful glance towards that far country from which their secret has severed them; probably few who would not in their hearts

rejoice if some second discovery could be made, which should enable them to hold the new without rejecting the old. We have, therefore, no right to represent men of science as the personal antagonists of the old faith, even where their opinions are diametrically opposed to that faith. Their opinions are, in most cases, the greatest burdens they have to bear, and they bear them *as* burdens. They are the victims to their own secret, the martyrs to the supposed discovery which they themselves have made. A light has broken over the fields of nature which seems to them incompatible with other lights, and in the spirit of stern duty they have left all and followed it. But they have not left all with joy; they have not abandoned the past without regret. They, like the Hebrew patriarch, may hope yet to find a land flowing with milk and honey, but they cannot forget that in exchange for that hope they are sacrificing what was once a possession.

It is then a mistaken view of the office of modern apologetics to regard it as an attack to be directed against men of science. We feel convinced that the most advanced evolutionists of the present day would hail the advent of any light which should reveal a place for the religious consciousness within that system of nature which they have been compelled to make their own. We feel convinced that by the large majority of such thinkers a

revelation of this sort would be regarded not as an antagonist but as an ally. There was a time, indeed, when men of science exhibited a personal hostility to the leaders of religious thought, but the fault lay with the religious leaders. Scholastic theology claimed the empire not only over the field of religion but over the field of nature, and every natural explorer who claimed to discover what the Church had not discovered was looked upon in the light of an usurper. That time has now passed away. The eyes of all men, whether in the world of religion or in the world of science, are directed with eager wistfulness towards the field of nature. No modern theologian would attempt to close his eyes to the fact, that the revelations made to the human mind from this quarter have been lately of the most startling kind. Whether he accepts or does not accept all the conclusions of the modern scientist, he feels himself bound to acknowledge that conclusions which have obtained the *imprimatur* of such distinguished names may at the very least possibly be true. He knows also that to prove them to be untrue would require long centuries. Under these circumstances, what is the true course for the modern theologian? He sees prevailing in scientific circles a theory which he himself is neither able to affirm nor to deny. The facts at first hand are not before him; he requires to take them on trust. The inferences

from these facts may appear to him to be still awaiting some confirmatory link, but he knows that for that link he will probably have to wait long. The question is, What shall he do in the meantime? Shall he suspend his judgment on matters of previous faith until more scientific light shall manifest itself? That would in all probability be equivalent to suspending his religious judgment for ever. Is there no other course open to him? Is there any means by which he may avoid a polemical attitude towards science on the one hand or an agnostic attitude towards religion on the other, whereby he may preserve at once his reverence for scientific research and his devotion to those doctrines which have constituted his religious faith?

There is one such means available to the modern theologian. The personal determination of the truth or fallacy of scientific statements of facts is, as we have said, beyond him, and investigation in this sphere is therefore to him impossible. But let the theologian begin by taking for granted the inferences of science, by assuming that the conclusions at which he has arrived have become recognised laws of nature. He will then be in a position to consider the real question, and the only question with which in this matter he has any concern—What effect will the establishment of these conclusions exert upon the old belief? to what extent will it modify, in what measure shall it overthrow,

the religious conclusions of the past? This, we say, is the real attitude in which modern theology should approach modern science. Assuming for the sake of argument that its conclusions are true, it should limit itself to the inquiry what these conclusions amount to. In following such a line of investigation, theology will have on its side the sympathy of men of science. Its apologetic aspect will be completely separated from any polemical attitude. It will take its seat where men of science sit—at the feet of nature. It will recognise its mission to be identical with the mission of science —that of an interpreter of nature. And if theology shall find that the conclusion to which nature is supposed to point would not, even if established, militate against her ancient faith, if she shall find that the need for a supernatural element in nature has not been lessened by the circuit of the suns, she will arrive at a peace and calm which will make waiting easy. She will be able to weigh impartially all announcements of scientific discovery, because she shall have already concluded that no amount of discovery in the field of natural Evolution can dispense with the necessity for a Presence and a Power which evolves.

Now we have said that in the view of our leading scientists there is a preliminary obstacle to the very attempt at such a reconciliation,—that the spirit of our age believes itself even against its will to be

bound to oppose the spirit of past ages. The ground on which our age feels this necessity resting upon it is its belief that it has arrived at a truth to which other epochs were strangers. That truth is the universal and unqualified dominion of law throughout all phenomena of the visible and invisible universe. The history of the progress of science has been the history of the progress of man's ability to find the traces of law in nature. There was a time when man looked at the facts of nature as a series of isolated events without sequence and without connection; that was the time when he had found no trace of law. By-and-by there broke upon him the conviction that there were certain departments of nature whose changes were not arbitrary but periodical, and whose manifestations must therefore be referred to the operation of some fixed principle. Even yet, however, it did not occur to him to include in this domain of law the great and startling events of nature; he limited its sphere to the things which he called commonplace. The rain and the sunshine might be linked to natural causes, but the thunderstorm, the hurricane, and the earthquake must still be regarded as preternatural influences. Then came a third stage in which these preternatural influences ceased to be preternatural,—in which thunder and hurricane and earthquake became themselves events whose causes could be

determined as easily as the rain and the sunshine. Lastly, this nineteenth century has brought a yet more exhaustive view of the universality of law; it has come by the discovery of that doctrine called the correlation of forces. That doctrine has not only abolished the distinction between great and small, but it has broken down the middle wall of partition which at one time was supposed to render the acts of the mind wholly independent of bodily influences. It has established the fact that between the life-force and the other forces of nature there is going on a constant action and reaction, so that they can no longer be regarded as occupying independent provinces, and the result has been that the domain of natural law has threatened to extend itself beyond the boundaries of nature, and to claim a sovereignty over that empire which has always been allotted to the rule of a spiritual agency.

Now the effect of all this has been that it has seemed to narrow, and ultimately threatened to destroy, the sphere of religion. Religion is essentially based upon the belief in the existence of something which transcends the world. It is not difficult to see that if the domain of natural law were to be extended universally and to be stretched out beyond phenomena, there would in the nature of things be no further possibility for the existence of religion. Religion is based upon the belief that

there is a Presence behind law, a Presence which gives to law at once its existence and its vindication. If we adopt the view that there is no room for such a Presence, if we deny that there is anywhere in the universe of being aught that transcends law, we have thereby committed ourselves to the position that the principle which regulates nature is a purely mechanical principle, and that the actions and events of nature are the product of a blind necessity. It is in this sense that the idea of religion is still bound up with the idea of miracle. We call that miraculous which transcends the order of nature; we ought not to limit the word to that which *supersedes* the order of nature. To supersede the order of nature is to violate it, but to transcend it may be to manifest it. If we believe in the existence of a Power behind nature, then the manifestation of nature itself is a revelation of that which transcends it, because it is a revelation of the existence of that Power which lies at the back of that order which it originates. Miracle, therefore, is involved in the notion of any religion. It cannot be escaped either by the Deist, the Theist, or the Pantheist. Whosoever believes that the laws of nature are the expression of a life behind them, has thereby signed his confession of faith in the existence of a perpetual miracle, for he has acknowledged his belief in the existence of a Power which, by his own admission, transcends all that he sees. The

question then narrows itself to this, Can our age any longer believe in miracle—in the existence of that which transcends nature? If it can, religion is still a possibility; if it cannot, religion must cease to be an element in human thought. This is the preliminary question in any inquiry concerning the relation of the old faith to the new. If this question be answered in the affirmative, we have a right to proceed in such an investigation; if it be answered in the negative, our way is for ever barred on the very threshold of the inquiry. We shall accordingly devote the following chapter to an examination of this important subject.

CHAPTER II.

THE PLACE FOR FAITH IN THE SYSTEM OF NATURE.

THE writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews defines faith to be the evidence of things not seen; he declares it to be that faculty whereby we understand "that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." The definition is a most remarkable because a most philosophical one; it is comprehensive in its very simplicity. It states that the essence of the religious faculty is its power to discover that there is something which transcends nature,—that the very existence of a visible order presupposes the existence of something which is not visible. We should not have been surprised to find that a period so primitive and unscientific as that in which the writer to the Hebrews wrote should have given birth to a very different definition of the word faith. We should naturally have expected to hear him say, "By faith we understand that the

word of God has power to break through the visible order of things." Such a definition of the province of faith would have been harmonious with the view popularly entertained of the nature of miracle. A miracle, in the popular use of the word, is that which either violates or suspends a law of nature. The supernatural is here contemplated as consisting in antagonism to the natural. Viewed in this light, an age of scientific law must prove destructive to the existence of religion, for just in proportion as violations of nature cease to be conceivable, will the evidence for such supernaturalism become fainter and more inadequate. But so far from basing his belief in the supernatural on the possibility of seeing changes in the order of nature, the writer to the Hebrews professes to find his evidence for the supernatural in the order of nature itself; it is through the things that are seen that he reaches his conviction of the existence of that which is not seen. It is not by an interruption of the visible order that he comes to the recognition of a Power and Presence behind it: on the contrary, it is by the recognition of the visible order itself that he is impelled to recognise the being of a Power not itself; it is by the sight of the visible order that he finds it to be inadequate to the explanation of its own existence.

We have alluded here to the definition of the

supernatural given by the writer to the Hebrews, because we are disposed to think that it is the only exhaustive definition that ever has been given. By this definition, in our opinion, the modern belief in the supernatural must stand or fall. If we define the supernatural to be that which violates the law of nature, we have defined not the supernatural but only a mode of supernaturalism. If any such violation of law were observed, it would of course be evidence for the existence of a Power behind nature, for that which can violate a law must transcend the law which it violates. But in point of fact it becomes more and more evident in modern times that the system of nature as now constituted does not admit of such a mode of supernaturalism. The question is not, whether a supernatural Power *could* violate the laws which He has made. There is not a scientific man in the world who would for a moment deny that if there be a Power which transcends nature, that Power can at any time alter nature. It could not even be said that such an alteration would be an unscientific act, for it is ever scientifically a natural principle that the greater should dominate the less. But the question with which the modern scientist has to do is not whether a supreme Power *could*, but whether in point of fact He *does*, interfere with the sequence of natural law. It is not with him a question of

philosophy but a question of observation. He sees a thunderstorm, and he asks, whence came it? He would not for a moment dispute that if there be a Divine Power behind nature, this thunder might be His direct voice. But what the man of science asks is not what the thunder *might* be, but what it *is*. He asks whether he can refer it to any antecedent causes in nature itself; and when he finds that he can, he inquires no further. He is absolved from investigating what any power *could* do, by discovering what the power existent in nature has actually done.

The scientific spirit, then, is opposed to that sense of the word "miracle" which regards it as a violation of the law of nature by a Power behind nature. But there is another sense of the word "miracle" which looks upon it, not as a violation of law, but as a manifestation that the law *does* proceed from something that is behind it,—a revelation that it is not self-constituted, but constituted by a Divine Power. This is the view of the supernatural which is adopted by the writer to the Hebrews, and the view which we believe to be the deepest and the soundest. The supernatural is here regarded not as that which breaks through nature, but simply as that which lies above nature. It is here looked upon not as something which occasionally manifests itself by the destruction or the suspension of the

laws which it has made, but as something which reveals itself always and everywhere in the executing and in the sustaining of these laws. In the view of this ancient writer, faith is not a state of mind which is to be called up only for special occasions, for startling events or for sudden catastrophes; it is a state of mind which is to exist habitually and unceasingly. And the reason why it is to exist habitually and unceasingly is a remarkable one: it is not because faith is to avert its eyes from the search for the supernatural, but because it is to see the supernatural in everything. To faith, as here defined, all things alike are to be revelations of the supernatural; every event is in this sense to be startling, every sight in this sense miraculous. The object of faith is to be the supernatural *in* the natural, or rather behind the natural. Its materials are to be derived not from that which sets aside but from that which vindicates the existing law, and it is to find its evidence for the unseen and eternal in its very study of the limits of the seen and temporal.

Now the question is, Can this view of faith stand the test of modern times? We have said that the conception of miracle which regards it as a violation of law is a thought inconsistent with the system of nature expounded by modern science: can the same be affirmed of that other conception of

miracle which regards it not as a violation but as a transcending of law? Is there anything in the facts of modern science which militates against that view of nature expounded by the writer to the Hebrews, whereby the visible order is made the expression of an invisible order, and faith finds her province in discovering that the things which are seen were not made of things which do appear?

It will not be maintained by any scientist that there is. The most advanced evolutionism of the nineteenth century does not contend that the facts of nature are adverse to the belief that there is something which transcends nature. The most that such evolutionists do contend for is, that we cannot know from nature whether there be or be not anything behind it; it is on this ground that in all religious questions they take the name of Agnostics. The most advanced unbelief of our day does not go so far as to say, There is no God; it would hold such a statement to be in the highest degree unscientific. The doctrine of Agnosticism is the doctrine of human ignorance; its leading article is the duty of humility. It warns man to affirm nothing and to deny nothing concerning that which transcends experience. It does not say that there is nothing which transcends experience, nor yet does it say that there is anything; it maintains that the existence or the non-existence of such a supersensuous region is alike unknowable,

and that being unknowable, it is not a subject either for belief or disbelief. Under these circumstances the Agnostic recommends to the minds of men an ignoring of the whole question. He advises them to confine themselves to the limits of the positive, by which he understands the limits of the five senses. He cautions them not to attempt to go beyond the range of experience, to keep within that margin which nature has prescribed to human knowledge, and to avoid inquiring whether in the infinite possibilities of the universe there be or be not any higher knowledge than the human.

It will be evident from this that the religious belief in something which transcends nature is not in our age called to contend with any positive argument to the contrary; it is only called to contend with the assertion that there is no ground for argument on either side. Modern belief is no longer met by *dis*belief, but simply by *un*belief: that which it has to encounter is not a positive but a negative. Agnosticism does not say, You are believing in a fallacy; it merely says, You are believing in something which cannot be verified. It asks, What is the use of opening up a region of faith when we have no evidence that it exists anywhere outside of our own imagining, and when all the time we have at the very door of our being a region of practical certainty accessible to observation and verifiable in actual experience? This, then,

is the real problem with which we have here to deal—whether there be or be not any ground for such a faith as was held by the writer to the Hebrews? The theology of our age is not called, like the theology of the last century, to answer objections; no objections are made. It is not called to prove that there are fallacies in the argument for atheism; no argument is offered for atheism—the Agnostic would deem an attempt to disprove God as contrary to true science as an attempt to prove Him. What the theology of our age has to do is to discover some positive ground for the continuance of a belief in that which transcends nature. It has to meet Agnosticism by proving that something can be known beyond the things of experience; or, to speak more correctly, by proving that there *is* a region beyond the things of experience—a region of whose essential nature we are, indeed, in ignorance, but of whose existence we have the most satisfactory evidence.

How is this to *be* proved? Shall theology refute Agnosticism by appealing to itself? that would, indeed, be reasoning in a circle. It will not do for the theologian to take refuge in that sense of mystery which he himself experiences in the study of Divine things. The Agnostic will tell him that the Divine things which have created his sense of mystery are themselves in all probability the creation of his own fancy and the product of his own

brain. He will tell him that he has first built the wall and then tried to push it down; that the thing which now transcends his power is itself the *result* of his power. Such a retort on the part of the Agnostic would, from his point of view, be quite legitimate: denying as he does that there is any evidence for the existence of a Power which transcends experience, he cannot, in reason, be expected to acknowledge the legitimacy of a sense of mystery which is professedly created by the contemplation of that Power. Here, then, we seem to be stopped on the very threshold, and to be debarred from the right of calling any witnesses whatever. Religious faith has in all ages felt that the object which it worships is one which transcends experience; but who is to tell, or by what evidence is it to be told, that this religious faith itself was not the child of a poetic imagination? If the theologian is to meet the Agnostic, it must be on other and wider ground—on ground which, for the time, shall be common to both, and in which both shall agree to find the issue by which their creed shall stand or fall.

Now there is such a common ground on which the theologian and the Agnostic may meet—the ground of that very Positivism on which the latter professes to base his whole system. For if we look at the matter a little more closely, we shall find that the necessity for faith in something which

transcends experience, is by no means a merely religious necessity. It is popularly thought that faith in the supernatural belongs peculiarly to the world of religion; in point of fact it belongs to every thinking man in every department of thought. If the believer in a God became the heir to certain intellectual difficulties which the non-believer in a God avoided, it would become a very serious question whether Atheism were not the more excellent way. But the truth is, the believer in a God does not become heir to a single intellectual difficulty which does not press with at least equal force on the non-believer. Sir William Hamilton has remarked that every difficulty in theology may be paralleled by an equal difficulty in philosophy; we may go further and say, that every difficulty in theology may be paralleled by an equal difficulty in Positivism, which is the negation of philosophy. Bishop Butler wrote his 'Analogy' to prove that every argument which can be used against Christianity can be used with equal force against Deism. Such a work was thoroughly well-timed in an age where the unbelievers in Christianity were believers in Deism. But in our age the men who have given up Christianity have, at the same time and for the same reason, given up Deism; they see in both these religions the worship of a Power which transcends nature, and they cannot find evidence for the

existence of such a Power. For them, therefore, there is needed a new Analogy—an Analogy which shall describe the relation not between the belief in Christianity and the belief in Deism, but between the belief in any religion and the belief in no religion. There is wanted a work which will show that the denial of a Divine existence involves intellectual difficulties precisely the same in kind and infinitely more intense in degree than the intellectual difficulties created by the acceptance of such an existence—difficulties which must compel the Positivist to find in nature herself that supernatural element which he has refused to recognise as existing beyond nature.

If such a book of Analogy were written it would lead, we think, to a very remarkable conclusion—the necessity for belief in miracle as a first principle of thought. Mr Hume says that we have no experience of a miracle; it seems to us that the sense of the miraculous is just the deepest experience of our lives. If it be asked in what sense we here use the word "miraculous," our answer is, it depends on what department of nature we are to consider. If a man accepts some religion as a solution of the universe, he will be compelled, indeed, to recognise a miracle, but only a miracle of the milder sort—a Power that *transcends* nature, but not necessarily a Power that violates nature. If, on the other hand, a man should refuse to ac-

cept any religion as a solution of the universe, and should insist instead on studying the universe itself, he will require to accept a miracle of the most pronounced description—a miracle which shall consist not in the mere transcendence of law but in the actual violation of law, and which shall make a demand upon his faith in comparison with which the requirement of any religion would be small and gentle.

To bring out this point, let us consider the alternatives which are open to a man who seeks a solution of the universe. These alternatives are three. He may say that the world never began to be—in other words, that its duration has been eternal. He may say that the earliest forms of matter and life sprang up spontaneously and became the progenitors of other forms—in other words, that the present system of things is, in its origin, the product of chance. He may say, finally, that the present system of things is the product of a Power that transcends it, and that therefore the first principle of the universe is a Divine Intelligence. These are the three alternatives, and, as Mr Herbert Spencer[1] admits, the only alternatives which are open to him who seeks a solution of the universe. Even the Agnostic must hold that one or other of these is the explanation of the origin of things. It is impossible that all

[1] First Principles, § 11.

of them can be false; it is impossible that if all of them were false any other solution of the problem could be given. We shall hereafter show that the first and the third are not mutually exclusive; meantime we have simply to point out that if the problem of the world's origin is ever to be solved, it must be solved somewhere within the limit of these three alternatives.

But we have now to observe that the acceptance of any one of these alternatives is tantamount to the acceptance of a miracle; one must be true, and yet any one is a choice of the supernatural. Let us glance at each of them separately, and let us begin with that which in the field of Agnosticism finds the most general acceptance—the theory that the world had no beginning.

Let us first distinctly understand what is the real issue here involved. It is the doctrine of evolution that there never has been an absolute beginning. That doctrine is commonly supposed to constitute the main difference between Theism and Atheism, but in truth there is not a theist in the world who would not gladly subscribe to it. Let no one imagine that in denying an absolute beginning, the doctrine of evolution is committing any religious heresy. The first principle of every religious believer is just the denial of an absolute beginning, just the assertion that there never was a time when absolute nothingness reigned. The

surest truth in the universe is the knowledge that there never was a period in which something did not exist; all science and all religion must alike concur in this. The question between evolution and theology, where such a question is started, does not lie in the affirmation or denial of an eternal something in the universe; the existence of such an eternal something is admitted by both. But the question begins where this admission ends. What is this eternal something? is it matter or spirit, extension or thought, nature or the supernatural? It is here that theology and Agnosticism part asunder. Theology holds that what is eternal in the physical universe must itself be of a nature which transcends the physical; Agnosticism holds that as we have no right to go beyond the limits of our sensuous experience, we have no right to assume that the thing which has existed from eternity is anything other than the visible order of nature.

Let us then, for the sake of argument, accept the view of the Agnostic. Let us say that something has existed from all eternity, and that this something is nothing else than the physical nature which our senses now perceive. What we wish to point out is this, that in adopting such a view the Agnostic is flying from Scylla into Charybdis. His reason for choosing the alternative of an eternal physical nature is, his idea that thereby

he will avoid the supernaturalism of a religious belief: he does avoid it, but he accepts instead the supernaturalism of an irreligious belief. For, let it be distinctly marked that the belief in the independent eternity of the present visible order is, in the most pronounced sense of the term, the acceptance of a miracle. Mr Herbert Spencer himself admits that such a belief is unthinkable. But why is it unthinkable? Is it merely because the idea of eternity is an idea which cannot be represented in the imagination? That this is not the cause will be evident from the fact that we do not experience the same difficulty in conceiving that the world shall never end, as we do in conceiving that the world has never begun. So far from finding the idea of an unending world to be unthinkable, we find it much more difficult to think the contrary—much more difficult to imagine a time when the present system of things shall cease to be. Now the idea of eternity is as much involved in the conception of an unending world as in the conception of an unbeginning world; and if that idea does not render the former conception unthinkable, there is no reason whatever why it should so affect the latter. Yet the fact remains, that while we have no difficulty, so far as imagination is concerned, in conceiving that the present system of things shall never end, we have a difficulty amounting to the impossible in conceiv-

ing that the present system of things has never begun.

We repeat the question then, What is it that renders this idea unthinkable? We have seen that it is not our inability to represent the notion of eternity, for we have the same inability in relation to an eternal future, and yet we find no difficulty in conceiving such a future. Why is it that when we try to conceive this world as having had an eternal past, we are forced to abandon the attempt in despair? The reason lies here: to conceive this world as having had an eternal past is to conceive a violation of law as now established; in other words, it is to believe in a miracle of the most pronounced type. Let us try to make this clear. This world, considered as an object of sense, is simply a series of changes, or as the Positivist would put it, a succession of antecedents and consequents. If this world has been eternal in the past, we have then the phenomenon of a series of changes going back into infinitude. This is equivalent to saying that we have a chain consisting of an infinite number of links, not one of which rests upon anything; which, again, is tantamount to saying that there is no chain at all. Not one of the links has an adequate antecedent, not one of them is either self-supporting or supported by anything else. The denial of a first link is equivalent to the affirmation that something is suspended on nothing,

or that a series of consequents exists without any antecedent. Now we are not here contending whether this conception be or be not false; but we contend that, whether false or true, it is the idea of a violated law, of a miracle, of a supernatural element introduced into nature. We contend that the man who accepts this conception as an article of belief is thereby committing himself to a faith in the supernatural, compared to which the faith of a religious man is small and insignificant. He is going far beyond Agnosticism itself. The Agnostic never goes further than to say that no true cause has yet been *discovered* in the world. But the man who holds this belief in an eternal regress of physical changes asserts not merely that no cause has been discovered but that no cause exists. He declares in effect that a series of phenomena which are transparently dependent and incapable of self-existence, have owed their life to another series of phenomena whose dependence is equally transparent, and whose incapacity for self-existence is not less manifest. And in committing himself to this doctrine he has committed himself emphatically to a confession of *faith;* it is only on the ground of faith that he can for a moment hold it. It is a violation of every law of all philosophy, not excepting Positive philosophy. It is a violation of every principle of causality — even of that Agnostic principle which can see in the cause only

an adequate antecedent. It is, in short, a recognition of the fact that there is in the natural an element which is supernatural, and that the things which meet the eye have not owed their being to "things which do appear."

This brings us to the second alternative—that which proposes to regard the world as having had its origin in a spontaneous accident; in other words, as having come by chance. Over this alternative we need spend no time, because the conclusion to which it points is transparent on the very surface; it is professedly the announcement of a miracle. It is admitted by Professor Huxley that to believe in the spontaneous generation of life is an act of *faith.* He himself professes to have that faith; but he candidly acknowledges that he has it in direct contradiction to all the facts of present experience — that if spontaneous generation ever happened, it must have occurred under conditions which no longer exist. The belief that life at one time arose spontaneously from dead matter, is itself the belief that dead matter at one time possessed a power which it does not now possess; in other words, a power which, in relation to the present system of things, is strictly supernatural. To admit that at any time matter possessed such a power, or to assert that at any moment there was introduced into the universe a single chance movement, is to destroy at one sweep

the whole doctrine of evolution. The doctrine of evolution cannot be held consistently by any one who is willing to concede that at any solitary moment of the infinite past there was a single intervention of the hand of chance. Professor Huxley *may* hold, by what he calls an act of philosophic faith, that there was one moment in which life sprang up spontaneously, but in so doing he has committed himself to the guidance of faith for ever. That one moment, if it ever existed, has destroyed all the moments of scientific evolution. It has broken that chain which professed to be an infinite and an irrefragable chain. It has introduced into the universe, midway in its career, a new and unheard-of element—an element unlike all that has preceded it, and unaccounted for by aught that has accompanied it. It has introduced it suddenly, unexpectedly, without cause or adequate antecedent, by what is equivalent to a creation out of nothing, which yet at the same time is a creation without hands. The amount of faith in the supernatural required for such a belief as this is simply appalling. The man who can embrace it must have a special gift of faith. It is the acceptance of a doctrine which is confessedly contrary to all scientific experience and avowedly opposed to all mental intuition; and, what renders the case more illogical still, it is the acceptance of a doctrine which is pronouncedly supernatural,

with a view to avoid the supernaturalism of another creed which is far less pronounced than its own.

For this leads us to the third of those forms of solution by which it has been proposed to account for the existence of the universe; it is that which regards the visible order of things as the result of a spiritual and creative Intelligence. This is the view which is commonly considered as the distinctively supernatural explanation. We have seen that this is a grand mistake. We have seen that every attempt either to explain the origin of the universe or to leave its origin unexplained, must alike end in the recognition of a supernatural element. We now go on to make good what we have already suggested—that so far from being the distinctively supernatural explanation, this theory of a creative Intelligence is quite the least supernatural of the three attempted solutions. It involves a miracle indeed, but not a miracle of the same class as that involved by the others. The doctrine that the world has existed from eternity, and the doctrine that the world has sprung into existence spontaneously, are alike beliefs which involve a violation of the law of nature as now established. But the doctrine that this world owes its origin to the work of a higher creative Intelligence does not involve a violation of the law of nature; it is only a miracle of transcendence. We are aware that this is the very point which has

frequently been made a subject of dispute. Mr Herbert Spencer, as Kant had done before him, labours to show that the conception of a supreme Intelligence is just as unthinkable as any of those other conceptions by which man has attempted to account for his own being. We shall try to represent as clearly and as strongly as possible the line of argument by which this charge of unthinkableness has generally been supported.

We start, it is said, with the notion that every existence must have a cause. We come, on this ground, to the conclusion that the world cannot be eternal, and that therefore there must be some infinite Intelligence to account for those wonderful phenomena which we see around us. So far all is well. But the moment we have found this Cause for our physical universe, we immediately proceed to violate that very principle of causality by which we profess to have found Him. We started with the assumption that every existence must have a cause, and on the strength of that assumption we concluded that the world must have a Creator. But, now that we have found the Creator, we do not go on to ask what has caused *Him;* nay, instead of that we start a new assumption—that *His* existence is self-existent; in other words, that His being is without a cause. The theologian is here charged with the most flagrant breach of logic. He is asked why he

affirms a principle of causality in order to *find* a God, and then denies it in order to make his God eternal. If he is willing to arrest the principle of causality at any place or time, why should he not arrest it in the universe itself? If there can be a God without a cause, why should there not be a world without a cause? If the theologian is willing in the highest sphere of existence to deny the necessity that existence must have a cause, wherefore should he not be willing to carry down this principle of denial into its lower and subordinate spheres; why should he not be content to say that the visible order is itself self-existent?

We have stated the argument as strongly as we can in order that it may have all the force which belongs to it. But now we have to point out that, plausible as the reasoning is, it is built upon a mistake. It is quietly taken for granted at the beginning that the fundamental principle of the theologian is, every existence must have a cause. We must emphatically deny that this is a principle either of theology or of metaphysics. The principle is, not that every *existence* must have a cause, but that every *change* must have a cause. If the world in which we live were merely an existence, we should not be warranted in concluding that there must be a principle underlying it. Our reason for concluding that there must be such a principle is the testimony of our experience that the world

in which we dwell is, so far as we see it, not self-supporting. It is because this world exhibits to us only a succession of changes that we are driven to infer the existence of a power underlying these changes. It by no means follows, however, that when we have discovered such a power, whether it be the God of Theism or the Force of Mr Herbert Spencer, we shall be bound to find a cause for *it* also. This power, whatever it be, may be changeless in its nature, and, if changeless in its nature, it is not a subject for the principle of causality.

It is a popular opinion that the mere sight of any existing object is bound to suggest the question, Who made it? It seems to us that this is a mistake. If an object were nothing more than *existing*, it would not to the primitive man offer any such suggestion. The reason why every object around us *does* suggest such a question is, that in point of fact every object around us is constantly exhibiting change. If, instead of an outward object, we take the consciousness of individual existence itself, we shall see this still more clearly. Let us suppose the case of a man brought into the world at the stage of manhood and with the powers of manhood fully developed; the very first question he should ask would be this, Where have I come from? He would take it for granted that he had come from somewhere, that he owed his being to the influence of some power beyond

his own. The child in actual life seldom gets the chance of putting that question; it is told from the very first that God made it, and so reflection on the subject is forestalled. But in the case of our hypothetical man, reflection would anticipate information; the sense of wonder would be too quick to be forestalled, and the question would come forth, Whence came I? But now, why is it that the man would put such a question at all in reflecting on the problem of his own existence? Would it be from his conviction that every existence must have a cause outside of itself that he would infer his own life not to be eternal? Not so. His search for a cause of his being would proceed from a very different source—not from an inference at all, but from an actual perception of fact. It would proceed from his consciousness that in point of fact he was not eternal. He would feel instinctively that his present being was the manifestation of a *change*. He would see behind him a blackness of darkness, a great blank of nothingness, out of which he had come by some process unknown to himself. It would be his sense of a change that would lead him to the conviction that there must have been somewhere a power to cause the change. Had his memory of the past been unbroken, had he been conscious of no blank in the yesterday, he would assuredly have concluded that his own being was eternal; but

when he knows that his consciousness of to-day has come to him as a surprise, he is inevitably forced to the conclusion that it has come to him by another power than his own.

This, then, is the inference at which we arrive. The third alternative for the solution of the universe is not unthinkable, and it is the only one of the three which is not unthinkable. This is simply, in other terms, to say that it is the least supernatural of the three. It involves only a supernaturalism which *transcends* the order of nature, not a supernaturalism which *violates* the order of nature. It sets aside no law, it suspends no principle, it interferes with no portion of the material mechanism; it simply postulates the fact that behind the material mechanism there is a principle which is immaterial. Leaving, however, this question for the present, we have here simply to refer to that result to which the investigation of this chapter has led us. We have been brought to the inevitable conclusion that there is a place for faith in the system of nature. Nay, to state the conclusion thus is to understate it. What we have found is not simply that there is a place for faith in the order of nature; it is rather that only through faith is there a place for nature itself. We have examined one by one the solutions by which it has been attempted to explain the existence of the universe, and each of these

solutions has yielded us the same result—a limit to the power of natural law. Whether we have considered the hypothesis of the world's eternity, or the doctrine of its spontaneous generation, or the belief in its origination from the hand of an intelligent Creator, we have found equally that the road of experience has come to an end, and that we have been compelled through the rest of our journey to travel by the flight of faith. We have found that each doctrine alike, though not in the same degree, has led to the conclusion that the natural is bounded by the supernatural, and that beyond the sphere of experiment and understanding there lies a region of the super-sensuous and the mystical. We have found, finally, that of the three alternatives, those which demand the most faith are just those which the opponents of supernaturalism have adopted with the view of avoiding the necessity of faith. We have seen that the worshippers of physical law are compelled, by the adoption of either of these creeds, to abandon the inviolability of that very law which they worship; and that the only belief which saves them from the necessity of beholding a violation of their cherished principles of nature, is just that faith in a supreme and supernatural Intelligence which, in the supposed interest of science, they are making such frantic efforts to gainsay.

CHAPTER III.

IS THE OBJECT OF FAITH KNOWABLE?

IN the previous chapter we arrived at the conclusion that the contemplation of nature inevitably leads to the recognition of a supernatural element—an element which cannot be avoided by any road we may choose to follow. But when this conclusion has been reached, we have only gained the threshold of another question. To know that there is a supernatural element is one thing; it is another and a very different thing to know *what* is that supernatural element. The question which immediately presents itself is this: conceding that there is an object of faith, is it conceivable that this object of faith can ever become an object of knowledge? Can we reach, after all, any higher conclusion than the simple fact that we have come to a barred gate? No doubt the very recognition of a barred gate proves that there is something on the other side of it, and to this extent it must be granted that

we have passed beyond Agnosticism. But, then, this extent is only negative; it is simply the recognition that there is a region beyond our experience into which we are forbidden to travel.

The question is, Can this region be known? Can we reach any other or any further knowledge of it than the fact that its gates are barred? Can the supernatural become to us anything more than a negation, anything more than a limit which says to the exercise of human thought, "Hitherto shalt thou go, and no further"? We do not here inquire whether, in point of fact, the supernatural has or has not revealed itself, or whether, as a matter of history, there is or is not adequate evidence for its revelation; that is an investigation which belongs specially to the sphere of the theologian. Our inquiry is a more outward and a more preliminary one, and one without the settlement of which the other cannot even be entered upon. We want to consider not whether the supernatural *has* revealed itself, but whether it *could* reveal itself, to the mind of man. If, as Agnosticism says, there be a great gulf fixed between our human experience and that which transcends experience—if the supernatural be in its very nature the antithesis and contrary of the natural—if there be no possible channel of communication by which the idea of a supersensuous world can be imparted to the world of sense,—we

are precluded on the very threshold from considering the claims of any revelation; we are debarred from entertaining for a moment any testimony of actual history which declares that, at any time, God made Himself known.

Now, if there be such an impossibility of the supernatural communing with the natural, it must lie in one or other of two things,—either in the nature of the finite, or in the character of the infinite. If there be an incompatibility between nature and the supernatural, it must consist either in the deficiencies of nature, or in the infinitude of that which lies beyond nature. As both of these positions have been taken by Agnosticism, we propose briefly to consider them each in turn.

And, first, it is averred that man has no faculty which gives him any knowledge of the supersensuous. We are told, again and again, that all the powers of the human mind are correlated with certain bodily impressions, and are unable to transcend the limits of these impressions. Every idea which enters the mind is an idea limited by the boundaries of earthly experience, and entirely incapable of soaring beyond that sensuous atmosphere which originally gave it birth. It is here that the main difference lies between the Agnostic and the Gnostic—the men of the nineteenth century who say they do not know, and the men of the second century who said they knew all about

it. The difference lies in the fact that the Gnostic believed himself to possess a special faculty for communing with Divine things; the Agnostic denies that he has any faculty which is not exclusively concerned with the interpretation of the sensuous and the human. The Gnostic held that there were in the human mind possibilities of a state of ecstasy whereby it could transcend the records of its own experience, and soar into a region with which the earth had no concern; the Agnostic holds that the only ecstasy of which the human mind is capable is one that directly arises from contemplating the things of time. The Gnostic affirmed that the clearest light we have comes from our moments of mysticism, when we are lifted above the visible and enabled to commune with the eternal and the unseen; the Agnostic declares that these moments of mysticism are themselves but the dimness of the outer senses, the temporary clouds that obscure our perception of the visible and actual world.

Here is a very striking difference amounting to nothing less than a direct antithesis. And yet we would call attention to the fact that antithetical as these two systems undoubtedly are, there is one essential point on which they are agreed.[1] They both take for granted that our sole hope in the

[1] We have already pointed out this in the anonymous article "Agnosticism" in the 'Scottish Review,' April 1883.

possibility of obtaining Divine knowledge rests upon our possession of a faculty which transcends the limits of earthly experience. They both assume that if there be no such faculty, there can be no means whatever whereby man can attain to any knowledge of the supernatural. The Gnostic claims to have such a knowledge, because he claims to possess a mysterious inner eye which beholds supersensuous things; the Agnostic maintains that he can have no such knowledge, because he feels that he does not possess any power which is capable of transcending the limits of sense or surpassing the boundaries of finite experience. The two are at one on their main position—that our recognition of a supernatural world depends on our possession of a supersensuous power.

But now, what if it could be shown that in this position, whose certainty is tacitly assumed, the Gnostic and the Agnostic are alike wrong? What if it could be shown that instead of being recognised by a special faculty, our evidence for the supernatural is actually suggested by the very limits of human experience itself? Such a discovery would not affect the question whether there be or be not a special power which communes with the Divine; it would leave that still an open question, but it would make its solution a matter of much less consequence. It would

prove that in order to establish their respective theories the Gnostic and the Agnostic have alike gone out of their way. It would then be possible to hold that the Gnostic was wrong in his premiss and right in his conclusion—wrong in believing in a supersensuous faculty, yet right in maintaining that he had a knowledge of the supernatural. It would then be possible to hold that the Agnostic was right in his premiss and wrong in his conclusion—right in asserting that he had no supersensuous faculty, but wrong in inferring thence that he could have no knowledge of the supernatural.

And yet, this is the very conclusion, the inevitable conclusion, to which we have been led by the investigation of the previous chapter. We there found that our idea of the supernatural was an idea directly suggested, not by any transcendental faculty nor by any supposed communion with transcendental things, but simply and solely by a study of the limits of nature herself. We found that we were necessitated to seek a supersensuous solution of the universe from the simple fact that the natural laws were unable, without violating themselves, to account for their own origin. We saw that to introduce the hypothesis of chance was to formulate the idea of a violation of the law of nature; that to adopt the conception of an unbeginning world was to deny the existence of any law of nature at all. By the exigency of these

alternatives we were driven to a solution of the universe which seemed at once more easy and more rational—a solution which did not violate any principle of nature, and which did not contradict any testimony of consciousness; we inferred that the movements of the universe must themselves be the manifestations of a Power beyond the universe. But what we want now to emphasise is the fact that the process by which we arrived at this conclusion was itself a purely natural process. We did not reach it by any transcendentalism, we did not come to it by any mysticism; we were driven to it by the barred gate of our own experience. It was the limits of our own senses that compelled us to seek a solution of the universe which invoked the presence of a Power beyond them. Experience, and nothing but experience, was the source of our information that nature was inadequate to account for her own existence. No transcendental logic, no mystical power of abstraction, no special faculty conversant with the things beyond experience, could ever in this matter have possessed one tithe of the authority which was wielded by the testimony of experience itself when it told us that the domain of visible nature was too narrow and limited to account for what we see.

Here, then, is a point which has been ignored by both the Gnostic and the Agnostic. Our knowledge that there is a supernatural is not suggested

by the supernatural; it comes from those very limits of experience which the Gnostic and the Agnostic alike hold to be barriers to our view of God. The stone which each of these builders has rejected is that which has been made the head of the corner. This is not a matter of theory; it is a matter of Positivism, of fact, of experience. We may, if we will, deny the existence of the supernatural, but we cannot deny that there have been times when we have dreamed of its existence. That dream was at the very least an idea, and the idea is here the thing that needs to be accounted for. However illusory it may have been, however short-lived it may have been, however soon it may have been supplanted by another and a contrary thought, it remains an eternal fact that it once was there. That at any moment of our lives there should have been present in the mind the conception that there is something which transcends the limits of nature, nay, that at any moment there should have entered the mind the idea that nature has a limit at all—this is the real problem that needs to be explained. And what we wish to emphasise is the fact that the explanation has been found, not in the exercise of a transcendental faculty, but in that sober study of the things of experience which the Positivist declares to be the boundary of human knowledge. It is from nature herself that we have learned the limits of nature,

and it is in learning the limits of nature that we have caught a glimpse of that region which is illimitable.

We have now considered the first of the positions by which it has been proposed to deny that the object of faith can be an object of knowledge. We have seen that if there be any barrier to an intellectual communion between the human and the Divine, it does not lie in the nature of the human—so far, at least, as that nature is viewed simply as finite. It is, of course, quite possible to hold that the human nature may have so debased itself by sin as to render it naturally incapable of communing with the Divine, but that is an ethical and not an intellectual barrier. We are here considering simply the position that the fact of man being a finite being debars him from attaining to a knowledge of God—and we have found that position to be untenable. We have seen that the moment a man reaches the idea of his finitude, he has already attained the thought of something beyond it, or, in other words, that the very recognition of a barred gate implies the recognition of something on the other side against which it is barred. There is, therefore, nothing in the fact of man being finite which renders it impossible for him to arrive at Divine knowledge; it is by the knowledge of his finitude that he reaches the idea of a Divine existence. And this brings us to the

second of those arguments by which it has been attempted to deny the possibility that man should know God. It is said that the nature of infinitude itself precludes such a possibility, that the moment the infinite were known it would from that very fact cease to be infinite. Let us try to explain this position a little more fully.

And let us begin by adverting again to the contrasted standpoints of Gnosticism and Agnosticism. The Gnostic and Agnostic are not only opposed in their views of man's capacity for knowing; they are also at variance in their doctrine of the nature of that object which is to be known. They have a totally different notion of what constitutes infinitude. Let us begin with the view of the Gnostic. To him the only infinite thing in this universe was spirit. All matter in his eyes was essentially a limit; infinitely extended matter would have been to him simply an infinitely extended limitation. The soul in this world was limited just because it was embodied; the Spirit of the universe was unlimited or infinite just because it was not embodied—just because it could not be represented by any visible likeness either in heaven, or on earth, or in the waters under the earth. Whenever, therefore, the human soul was able to disembody itself, it was thereby able to commune with God. And, according to the Gnostic, such disembodiment was quite possible even

in the present world. A man did not need to wait for it until he came to die; he might find it now and here. He had only to retire within himself, to withdraw himself from the things and desires of time, to keep his thoughts fixed upon those abstract and bodiless truths which were independent of the seen and temporal, and he would thereby be elevated into that illimitable region which was the very home of the Infinite; when he had freed his thoughts from the images of sight, he would reach the knowledge of Him whom eye hath not seen.

Now it is asserted by the Agnostic, that if there be in the nature of God an infinitude of this description, it is certainly a species of infinitude which could never be an object of knowledge to any human soul. The Agnostic maintains that the very idea of human knowledge implies a material or bodily limitation. We cannot, he says, think of anything except under the limits of space and time. Even ideas which we call spiritual are never separated from the thought of matter. Our notion of virtue is uniformly associated with one or more virtuous *acts*. Our conception of beauty is inseparable from the concrete image of some beautiful form. Even our idea of holiness is intimately connected with our remembrance of certain bodily temptations which, through the power of a higher spirit, we were enabled to resist. God Him-

self, if known to us at all, could only be made known to us through some portion of our individual nature; and that which speaks to any part of our individual nature must of necessity be itself embodied. To recognise God *as* God, would itself be to separate God from other beings; and to separate God from other beings is to embody Him in a distinct form. The very recognition, therefore, of a presence which we distinguish as divine, implies that we are not in a region of infinitude where there is no distinction between one thing and another, but that we are in a world where God Himself is so distinct from other things that He is able at once to be distinguished from them.

We pass now to the second conception of the nature of infinitude—that entertained by the Agnostic. In his view, that which conveys the nearest symbol of infinitude is matter. The Gnostic reached his conception of the infinite by a process of subtraction—by lopping off one by one all the material elements from the tree of life. The Agnostic, on the other hand, believes that the effort to realise the infinite can only be made by a process of addition—by adding material field to field until we have arrived at the conception of a space without limit and a universe without bounds.

Here, however, the Agnostic himself pauses and draws back. Holding, as he does, that the effort to realise the infinite can only be made by the

extension of matter, he holds not less strongly and distinctly that every such effort must prove a complete failure.[1] He denies that, in point of fact, any attempt to reach the conception of an infinitely large material universe has ever been followed, or can ever be followed, by success. He asks us to figure in our imagination, if we can, the image of such an infinite universe. The moment we have figured any universe at all, we have *ipso facto* denied its infinitude. What is the reason that we are able to figure any object? It is simply because every object in the world is finite or limited—is bounded or marked off from other things by a certain definite form. If I am able to conceive the form of a house, it is just because the form of a house is separated from the forms of other things. If the house were identical with the ground on which it stands, I could not possibly conceive it; it is because it is an object distinct from other objects that I have any perception of it at all. And this distinction, let us remember, is a limit. It is the distinction of one thing from another which prevents that thing from being infinite; if it were infinite it would be incapable of being distinguished, which is only, in other words, to say that it would be incapable of being known. On this ground the Agnostic rejects the material,

[1] Agnosticism here includes more than the mere empiricist; it comprehends the school of Mansel and Hamilton.

as he had rejected the spiritual Infinite viewed as an object of possible knowledge. Both are to him alike unknowable; the recognition of either would to him involve a contradiction in terms. Constructed as they are by two opposite methods —the one by the diminution, the other by the enlargement, of the world of sense—they are both alike to him incapable of presentation to the human consciousness, and unable to be expressed in terms of human knowledge. The Agnostic therefore asks, not without a show of plausibility, what we expect to gain by our search for the supernatural. He points us to the fact that, sooner or later, we must be brought in our investigation to that adamantine wall against which the intellect of man has dashed itself in vain—the idea of infinitude. He reminds us that, to represent that idea would be to destroy the very thing which it represents; and he warns us to abandon beforehand an effort which, however protracted, can only end in ignominious failure, and only produce an exhaustion of those intellectual powers which might be more fitly expended on themes of practical usefulness.

Can this adamantine wall be broken down? That is the question which, according to the popular notion, should now lie before the theologian. A rampart has been constructed by the Agnostic against the possibility of Divine knowledge, and

it is naturally held that the first duty of the Christian apologist is, to bend his efforts towards its destruction. Has it ever occurred to us that there is a preliminary question, and a question which, if answered satisfactorily, would render the putting of the other superfluous? Before asking whether the wall can be broken down, would it not be well to ask whether the wall is really the barrier it professes to be? Before inquiring if there is any means by which we can gain a conception of infinitude, would it not be well to inquire whether we need to gain such a conception in order to acquire a knowledge of God? For our part, we are convinced that we do not. We feel sure that the barrier raised by Agnosticism against the possibility of Divine knowledge has been erected in the wrong place, and is therefore no barrier at all. We are persuaded that the solution of the question whether man has or has not a power to know the infinite, so far from being a problem which awaits him on the threshold of religious speculation, is a problem which can only begin when he has already reached a knowledge of God; and we shall endeavour, as briefly as we can, to set forth and explain the grounds on which we have arrived at this conclusion.

We have seen that there is an opposition between the Gnostic and the Agnostic as to the possibilities of human nature. The former holds

that human nature is potentially unlimited, and that man is able to comprehend the infinite; the latter holds that human nature is confined within the boundaries of time and sense, and that therefore the infinite can never be an object of man's knowledge. From these opposite standpoints, the Gnostic and the Agnostic have assumed different attitudes towards religion: the former, from his belief in man's power to know the infinite, concludes, as a matter of course, that he has power to know God; the latter, from his conviction that man can never know the infinite, proceeds, by one bound, to the conclusion that he can never know God. Now, diverse as these systems are, there is, strange to say, one point in which they are agreed; they both assume that the knowledge of God is identical with the knowledge of the infinite. They both take for granted that the essence of God is His infinitude, and from that premiss they quite logically conclude that, if infinitude cannot be known, God is therefore unknowable. But we deny that the premiss, on which the conclusion rests, is itself sound; we deny that the essence of God *is* infinitude. And our reason for the denial is this: infinitude cannot be the essence of anything either divine, human, or material. Infinitude is not an essence: it is a quality or attribute; it is a certain degree of intensity possessed by an object already existing. The object must *be* al-

ready existing before it can be said to be either finite or infinite. Finite and infinite are both qualities which we attribute to the nature of certain beings or things.

Before we can say that a thing is either finite or infinite, we must know what the thing itself is. Finiteness and infiniteness do not refer to the *nature* of an object, but to the intensity with which that nature is possessed. When I say that a house is finite, I do not mean that finitude is that which *constitutes* the house; that which constitutes the house is clearly its form. What I mean is, that the image of the house, which I have already in my mind, does not give me the impression of an object infinitely large, but of a figure which on every side is bounded and limited by other objects; therefore it is that I call it finite. The finitude, however, is not the first, but the latest, fact of knowledge I acquire; it is a quality which I only perceive when I have already learned the nature of the object. When I say again that space is too infinite to be fully comprehended by the mind of man, I have seemingly asserted a fact in favour of Agnosticism; I have declared that space is infinite, and that I cannot know it in its infinitude. Yet what has brought me to this conclusion? Not my ignorance of space, but just my knowledge of space. It is only because I have learned what it is, that I have learned my inability

to know it fully; my Agnosticism has grown out of my knowledge. I have come to the conclusion that space must possess a quality of infinitude, which to my finite mind is incomprehensible; but I have come to that conclusion because, through the powers of my finite mind, I have learned that the idea of space is a necessary idea, an idea without which no object in heaven, or earth, or sea can have any existence to my consciousness.

Let us now proceed to apply this to the idea of God. When I say that God is infinite, what do I mean? Clearly this: that He is a Being possessed of attributes which in their intensity are boundless. If I wish to know the nature of this God, am I to begin with the boundlessness or with the attributes? The latter is clearly the only possible method. When I say that God is infinite, I mean that a certain kind of existence is infinite, —a certain life, a certain character, a certain phase of spirituality. The first thing I have to learn is the nature of that existence, that life, that character, that phase of spirit; when I have arrived at this conception, it will then be time for me to consider whether I have the power to realise it to its full extent—in other words, in the boundlessness or infiniteness of its intensity. To begin with that boundlessness would be to rear a superstructure without a foundation. Were we to ask a seeker after God what he is seeking, and were

he to answer that he was in search of the infinite, we should ask again, the infinite what? Is it the infinite universe, or the infinite void, or the infinite mind? A man may seek the infinite without seeking God; infinitude is a quality that belongs to time and space, and perhaps to matter itself. That which makes God different from time and space and matter is not His infinitude but His nature, and therefore to know God is not to know His infinitude but to know His nature. Paradoxical as it may sound, it is as a finite and not as an infinite being that God must be known. We must form a definite conception of what He is, and then we shall be at liberty to extend that conception indefinitely. If the result of our efforts to extend it should only be to teach us the impossibility of exhausting its contents, we shall at least have the satisfaction of knowing that our inability to comprehend God's infinitude has been taught us by our knowledge of the nature of God Himself.

We demur, then, to the statement that God is the infinite. A man may say that God is infinite, or that God has infinitude; but to say that God is *the* infinite, is equivalent to saying that the name God may be applied to any object which suggests the idea of boundlessness. To affirm that God is the infinite seems to us just as absurd as to say that the rose is the red. The rose is not the red, because redness is a quality which may belong to

many objects besides roses, and which is therefore not that distinctive feature which marks off the rose from any other thing. God, in like manner, is not the infinite or boundless, because God is not the only existence which presents to the mind the notion of boundlessness. Boundlessness may be predicated of any quality, whether virtuous or vicious. The belief in infinite power does not of necessity involve the belief in a Divine being at all; the divinity depends on the nature of that being who lies behind the infinitude and who wields the power. The first thing which every man must know is the character of that object whom he professes to worship. Before all things he must in his own mind assign to him certain spiritual attributes, and he will not reach these attributes by starting with the notion of infinitude. Let him forget, in the meantime, all thought of infinitude; let him banish alike the word and the idea until he has found an object to whom he can attribute the idea and apply the word. When he has found that object, when he has fixed in his mind what those attributes are to which he shall be willing to give the name of God, he will then be entitled to consider how far he is able to conceive these attributes in an intensified degree; he may begin to study God's perfection when he has arrived at the knowledge of that which in God is perfected.

We have been led, then, to this conclusion: If there be any barrier to man's acquisition of Divine knowledge, it does not lie either in man's finitude or in God's infinitude. There is nothing in the nature of our faculties nor in the limits of our human experience which makes it impossible for us to reach a knowledge of the supernatural, for, in point of fact, it is from these very limits of our experience that our idea of the supernatural has come. There is nothing in the fact of God's infinite nature which makes it impossible for us to find in Him an object of knowledge, for the infinitude of His nature is but the degree of its intensity, and we may know the nature without measuring its degree. Since, then, there is no barrier to our Divine knowledge, either in the limits of our own mind or in the absence of limit in the Divine mind, it remains to ask whether there is any barrier in the actual facts of human knowledge. It remains to ask whether the progress of modern investigation has presented the constitution of nature in a light so new as to render the old belief in the possibility of Divine communion a superannuated and faded dream. Metaphysics and theology have still left unbarred the gates of possibility; has the development of modern science compelled us to close these gates? Has the increasing knowledge of nature, which our nineteenth century has confessedly revealed, contributed in any degree to

shut those avenues of communion through which man in all ages has sought an approach to God? Are we, in short, now that the light of science has made us humble, any longer entitled to assume that we are worthy to hold that place in the universe of being which our fathers claimed to occupy, and in virtue of which occupation they aspired to communion with the Divine? A consideration of this question must be deferred till the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CONDITIONS REQUISITE TO DIVINE KNOWLEDGE.

"AND God said, Let us make man in our own image," are the striking words in which the Scriptures of the Old Testament introduce their revelation. It is not sufficiently often borne in mind that these are the words which constitute the possibility of that revelation — nay, that words such as these are required to constitute the possibility of any revelation whatever. To see this, we have only to put to ourselves the question, What is implied in the assertion that man can know God? We shall be driven instantaneously to the conclusion that man can know God only by having a kindred nature to God. This is not a mere principle of theology, nor a doctrine which has found place simply in the minds of those who believe in spiritual regeneration; it is one of the oldest, one of the most widely spread, and one of the least controverted maxims of philosophy. It

is as old as Empedocles; it is the doctrine alike of the Atomist and of the Sophist; it is at the root of all modern metaphysics, and at the base of all nineteenth-century science. A principle so early enunciated and so recently affirmed, so widely accepted by the past and so generally influential in our own day, deserves at the outset to receive a little consideration.

The principle of which we speak is that thought which was first embodied in the philosophic maxim of Empedocles—"Like can only be known by like." The idea here conveyed is, that in order to know anything, the man who knows must have something in common with the object which is known. What the writer of the Book of Genesis applied to the knowledge of God in particular, the philosophers of Greece applied to all knowledge whatsoever. They affirmed that in the nature of things it was essential to every act of human knowledge, either that the man should be made in the image of the thing which he perceived, or that the thing which he perceived should have been made in his image: without such a community of nature there was of necessity a great gulf fixed between the eye of the beholder and the object which it beheld.

And, indeed, a moment's reflection will convince us that, as a matter of actual experience, this is the only condition of any knowledge. When we read a book, we seem to be put in possession of

something which is foreign to our original nature; in reality, however, it is not so. In point of fact, we are able to understand the book just in proportion as the book is already in our own image. It may communicate to us outward events of which we were previously unaware, but it cannot communicate to us a single thought whose germ is not already in our own mind. In all departments of study we must, previous to our entrance on the study, be spiritually in unison with that which we are about to contemplate; and as a condition to receiving any information, there must already be established between us and our object a certain communicating bridge on which we and it may meet face to face.

The question then between Gnosticism and Agnosticism narrows itself to this: whether there is or is not the possibility of any species of Incarnation. The statement may seem a startling one, but it is strictly and philosophically true. The necessary postulate to any knowledge of God whatever, is the belief that some mode of the Divine nature is in union with some phase of the human nature; if the possibility of such knowledge be conceded at all, other foundation for it can no man lay. There is not a religion in the world which does not in some form or other presuppose or teach the doctrine of an Incarnation. That doctrine openly or implicitly pervades the whole circle of sacred thought. It animates the worship of the

Brahman, it underlies the creed of the Polytheist, it is bound up in the philosophy of the Platonist, it is necessary to the belief of the Theist, it is the life and soul of the faith of the Christian. If there ever was a religion which might seem at first sight to be alien to the spirit of Incarnation, that religion was Judaism. There, God was a being of solitary majesty, dwelling at an immeasurable distance from His creatures, and transmitting His messages to the sons of men only through intermediate intelligences. Yet even this religion, with so exaggerated a view of the Divine transcendence, was compelled in the interest of philosophy—nay, in the interest of that very faith which she professed—to accept an intellectual bridge between the human and the Divine. She was compelled to account for the fact that the messages transmitted by God, through however many intermediaries they passed, were ultimately received and understood by a creature so distant as man; and she accounted for that fact by affirming in unusually strong language the principle that like is known by like,—God said, "Let us make man in our own image."

If, then, Agnosticism is to be met at all, it must be met on this fundamental question—the possibility of Incarnation. We use the term in its widest sense to denote the possibility of any contact between the nature of the human and the nature of the Divine. It matters not for our

present purpose how that contact is supposed to have come; whether from the stooping of God down to man, or from the lifting of man up to God. All that we are here concerned with is, the existence of the contact itself; and we maintain that, if God is to be an object of knowledge, the existence of such a contact is a first necessity. Now the question which we have here to consider is, whether the modern doctrine of evolution has rendered more doubtful the possibility of this contact. We are not writing a work on apologetics. We are not seeking to defend the doctrines of the old faith on their own ground. What we desire to do is, to see whether and to what extent the old ground has been attacked, and to register the result of our observation. Naturally, therefore, we begin with that doctrine which lies at the basis of all religion—the possibility of a contact between God and the human soul. We begin with inquiring whether the modern doctrine of evolution has to any extent interfered with our faith in the existence of a certain meeting-place between the Divine and the human. We want to know whether that ladder, on which communications were once supposed to ascend and descend, never existed anywhere else than in the dreams of Jacob and such as he; whether it has ceased to have a place within the possibilities of science, and must henceforth be relegated to the sphere of poetic fancy.

Now it is only fair to observe that, in the view of many eminent modern thinkers, the idea of a likeness between God and man had its root in an infantine stage of human development. Mr Herbert Spencer, for example, has not scrupled to contend that the first conception of God in the image of man owed its birth to individual fear. When a great chief passed away, he left behind him in the minds of his primitive subjects so great an impression of his power that they conceived his influence to be still invisibly abiding. While yet alive, he had ruled them with a rod of iron; and now that he was dead, they were unable to realise that the rod had been removed. Accordingly, they transformed their memory of the past into a present reality, and persuaded themselves that the power which their chief had so long exercised on earth was still exercised by him in heaven. They conjured up the notion that he had a ghost or invisible presence, which, although emancipated from its material environment, was still potent in the exercise of the old authority, and still sedulous in the execution of the old laws.[1]

Now the theologian is not concerned to deny that the first conception of a conformity of image between God and man may have had its birth in an infantine stage of humanity; he is only concerned to deny that it *owed* its birth to such a

[1] Data of Ethics, p. 115 *seq.*

stage. That very innocence, which the theologian has been taught to attribute to the primitive man, is itself a stage of intellectual infancy. But what the theologian wants to know is, whether an impression, received at the dawn of human consciousness, is on that account necessarily a false impression. He wants to know whether the opening mind cannot form certain ideas of things which shall be endorsed by the experience and by the reflection of maturer years,—whether there may not be present at the dawn the same elements of light which shall be discernible in the setting sun. It is no condemnation of a theory merely to prove that it had its birth in an early stage of society. Even the earliest stage of society embodies within it some elements which survive its disappearance and live on to the latest times; and who is to tell that the particular theory in question may not itself be one of these? The simple question is, Has it, or has it not, been able to survive? Conceding that man in his infancy declared himself to be in the image of God, we must then go on to ask what man says in his manhood. We must ask whether his latest utterance confirms or denies his earliest averment,—whether his ripest experience endorses or rejects the presentiment of his opening years. If we shall find that the doctrine of modern science, be it false or true, is at variance with the sentiment which prompted the original conclusion,

we shall then be compelled to admit that, whether rightly or wrongly, humanity has outgrown its creed. But if, on the other hand, we shall find that the latest speculations of modern science lend themselves naturally and easily to the doctrine of an analogy between the human and the Divine—nay, that the speculations of Mr Spencer himself lead directly to the maintenance of such an analogy —we shall not consider it any barrier to this conclusion to know that the same fact was affirmed in the days when, intellectually, man was only a child.

Now we have no hesitation in saying that the modern doctrine of evolution, and especially the modern doctrine as expanded by Mr Spencer, is more favourable to the existence of an analogy between the human and the Divine than any previous system of nature with which we are acquainted. We are not here inquiring whether the doctrine of evolution be false or true; we are assuming, for the sake of argument, that it *is* true, and considering what relation its truth would have to those religious doctrines which are most surely believed among us. Assuming, provisionally, the truth of evolution, we naturally ask, first, what effect its acceptance would have on the most fundamental of all religious doctrines, and the doctrine without which no religion would be possible—the belief that the nature of God is some-

where in contact with the nature of man? And starting from this basis, we say that the modern theory of evolution, whether false or true, is rather favourable than adverse to such a belief,—that, so far from throwing a barrier in its way, its acceptance would rather tend to demolish barriers which have been constructed by other and earlier systems of philosophy. We shall briefly state the grounds on which we have come to this conclusion.

The leading aim of the modern doctrine of evolution is, to establish the unity of species. It seeks, if possible, to abolish ultimately all plurality of existence, to reduce the many to the one. It is not only in the sphere of animal and vegetable life that the doctrine of evolution aims to find a single species out of which all other species have come; its design reaches much further than that. Evolution seeks to start from the highest known form of creation, and thence to go back to the lowest,—to begin at the top of the ladder and descend, step by step, until it reaches the ground on which the ladder rests. The question is, What is that ground,—what is the basis on which the summit of the ladder must ultimately repose? The summit of the ladder, so far as it has yet been climbed, is man. What, then, according to evolution, is the basis of man, the species from which he was originally evolved? It is not difficult to see that he has something in common with the animal, both as

regards his structure and as regards his life; and evolution has sought to show that the amount of similarity is adequate to prove that the human has, structurally at least, been evolved from the animal. But evolution cannot stop here. The man and the animal alike have something in common with an order of creation which is inferior to both—the kingdom of plant-life. The evolution theory, therefore, descends a step further still, and seeks to prove that plant-life was the germ from which the two higher orders were structurally developed. But it cannot stop even here. The man, the animal, and the plant have in their turn something in common with a lower order of creation still; they have elements in their structure which they have derived from the matter of the earth. Evolution, accordingly, seeks to find facts to show that the elements of non-living matter have had something to do with the production of those forms of plant-life which have developed into forms of animal organisation, and which have ultimately flowered into the bodily organisation of man.

Can evolution stop here? that is still impossible. The man, the animal, the vegetable, and the matter of the earth from which they draw their sustenance, have all something in common with an order of existence behind them. That order of existence is force. All forms of earthly matter are subject to one great force—the principle of gravity. The

human frame, the body of the animal, and the forms of vegetable life, are all attracted towards the earth as their centre. But this attractive power which seems to reside in the matter of the earth does not really reside there. The briefest observation convinces us that, so far from being an active source of gravity, the earth is itself a passive recipient of that force. The matter of the earth is found to be so united to the matter of other worlds as to be incapable of existing if these other worlds were withdrawn. The evolutionist is thus lifted a step further back in his efforts to find the origin of species. One would have thought *a priori* that the earth would have proved his terminus; it has proved, in truth, only his beginning. It reveals itself as but the fragment of a vast system—a system to whose existence it owes its being, and by whose force its own forces are constituted. Here, then, is a common ground existing between the earth and the whole solar universe—a ground of mutual dependence. The matter of the earth cannot exist in its present form without the matter of the solar heavens; the matter of the solar heavens cannot exist in its present form without the matter of the earth. This mutual dependence of forces indicates that in neither of them does the force find its original seat, and the evolutionist is therefore driven back further still in his search for a first principle. Looking abroad

over the solar universe, he perceives that the mutually dependent forces of the earth and the other planets are themselves dependent on the force of a great central luminary—the sun. To the sun, accordingly, the evolutionist turns his eyes, in the hope of discovering there the original seat of at least that particular system which bears its name. Nor does he fail to find evidence that this central luminary once united within itself all those planetary forms which now circle round it. He sees that the further back he goes in time the sun is of necessity increasing its diameter. A year ago its diameter was 220 feet greater than it is now; a hundred years ago it was four miles greater; a thousand years ago it was forty miles greater; ten thousand years ago it was four hundred miles greater. The evolutionist asks us to conceive what its diameter must have been in periods of indefinitely distant ages. It is not difficult to see that the sun must at that time have been the all of the solar universe, that it must have engulfed within itself all those forms and forces which have now a partially independent being, and that it must have combined in a life of comparative unity the elements of those structures which have since emerged into such striking variety.

Yet there is no reason to believe that the evolutionist has even here reached his terminus. There is no reason to think that the sun, however

much it may be the source of the solar system, is itself anything more than the fragment of a larger and wider system. There is no reason to doubt that the mutual dependence which prevails among planets, prevails likewise among suns, and that our luminary is indebted for its being to the being of a universe beyond it. Once more, therefore, the evolutionist turns his eye backward in search of a principle of unity more distinct and more indisputable than he has hitherto found. He is no longer able to follow the stream of actual facts, for, when he has reached the centre of the solar system, he has almost reached the boundary of direct observation. But where observation fails, imagination begins. The man of science, where the critical faculty becomes unavailable, appropriates for a time the faculty of the poet, and seeks by a flash of intuition to realise that unity of nature which the limitations of physical sense forbid him to trace or verify.

It is to this leap of the scientific imagination that we are indebted for the theory known as the nebular hypothesis. With the explanation or defence of that hypothesis we have here nothing to do; we are only concerned with it in so far as it is an attempt to reduce the many forms of nature to the one. Viewed in this light, its scope may be thus indicated. The evolutionist conceives that, just as all the planets of the solar system

once formed a part of its central luminary or sun, so all the planets of every other system once formed a part of their central luminary or sun. When the plurality of revolving worlds in the universe has thus been reduced to the plurality of the suns round which they move, the evolutionist goes on to reduce still further this multiplicity of objects. He goes on to conceive a time when the suns themselves were engulfed in a fire more central still. He imagines that at one period the central luminaries of the various planetary systems were all united in the mist of a fire-cloud. He starts from the conception of a vast nebulous mass of heated matter, slowly revolving round its own axis, and gradually cooling down. Within this heated nebulous mass he conceives to have been originally embraced all the forces of the physical universe. He conceives that here were mixed up in an indistinguishable unity the lights of various stars and the stars of various systems—that the planets were merged in their suns, and their suns were merged in the fire that gave them birth—until all plurality was lost in the indiscriminate commingling of those forces and powers of nature which now exist as seemingly independent elements.

One would think that evolution must here at last have exhausted her possibilities of simplification, must here have finally attained her nearest approach to the discovery of a unifying principle.

In truth, however, it is not so. Science sees clearly that what she has really attained by this nebular hypothesis is no unity at all, but only the temporary concealment of a difference. She sees clearly that, conceding the truth of this general engulfment in a fire-cloud, it does not amount to anything more *than* an engulfment; it no more destroys the separate potencies of things than a flood which submerged the world would thereby destroy that distinction of elements which existed before submergence. The very fact that the forces latent in this fire-cloud are able ultimately to separate themselves into distinct and relatively independent forces, is a proof that while *in* the fire-cloud the forces *were* only latent and not non-existent. If their difference had been non-existent at the beginning, it would have remained so for ever.

And here it is that the theory of evolution, in the person of its representative, Mr Herbert Spencer, feels itself constrained in its search for unity to overleap the boundaries of materialism. Starting as it does with the structures and the forms of things, and tracing back, step by step, the process by which these forms and structures emerged from a common unity, it ends by making the discovery that no structural or physical basis can ever ultimately constitute that unity. Evolution, therefore, is driven by her own scientific researches to suppose the existence of a world which is not physical and

not conditioned by finite things. After exhibiting in minute detail the operations and the transmutations of the forces men call physical—after tracing with untiring care the links of that chain by which these forces penetrate the universe,—Mr Spencer has at last[1] been compelled to admit that they are each and all inadequate to account for a single process of that universe. He has been compelled to recognise the fact that, potent as they seem to be, they are, after all, but the symbols and the emblems of another and a mightier Power, which exists transcendently behind them, and of whose existence they are only the manifestations. What that Power is Mr Spencer does not say; he maintains that it is impossible to say; he contends that its nature is inscrutable. But there is one fact about it which Mr Spencer does grant—a fact which, however negative in itself, has very positive bearings; he admits that this inscrutable Force or Power, which is the ultimate uniting principle of all other forces and powers, is a principle which itself transcends every material process of nature. It is not a *result* of physical forces, but a cause of physical forces; it unites them not simply by combining, but mainly by underlying them. Without this transcendental Force the forces of nature could no more be, than the shadow could be without the

[1] He contemplates this result, indeed, from the beginning; see his chapters on the Unknowable in earlier part of First Principles.

substance. In truth, in Mr Spencer's view, these *are* the shadows and this *is* the substance. The things which we see, hear, taste, and handle, come to us from a region of mystery—nay, are now in a region of mystery. What they are in themselves we know not; we only know what they seem to be, and that their seeming must be very different from their reality. Their reality lies in that Existence which they manifest—an Existence which transcends them even while it supports and manifests them—a Power whose being is to them inscrutable even while in it they live and have *their* being.

To this goal, therefore, have we come, led by the hand of the evolution theory itself. We have been obliged in our search for unity to fall back upon the belief in the existence of a Power which transcends the world of matter as we know it—to postulate the life of a Presence which, although everywhere persistent, is yet everywhere inscrutable. Let it be remembered that, according to Mr Spencer, the belief in such a Presence is equally necessary at all times. It is not something which is required to account for certain processes of nature; it is required to account for every minutest step of every natural process whatever. Mr Spencer does not profess to be a theist, and he would certainly repudiate the imputation of believing in a special Providence; yet no theist, no believer in a special Providence, ever asked more from his

God than Mr Spencer asks from his inscrutable Power. What he demands from that Power is nothing less than an absolute omnipresence, pervading all the movements and persisting through all the changes of nature. The Force which *he* requires to account for the universe is a Force which is not required in one place more than another, or at one time more than another. In the view of Mr Spencer, the physical manifestations of nature are all in an equal degree impotent to produce themselves, and all in an equal degree demand the existence of a Power behind them. To him there is no distinction in nature between great and small; nature is a united organism, a connected whole, to which every part contributes, and in which every part is equally essential. No single part of the visible framework is either self-originating or self-supporting, nor does the visible framework subsist simply by the union of all. For every moment of its being, for every breath of its life, for every manifestation of its movement, there is needed the presence and the action of a Force which is itself perfectly inscrutable and perfectly transcendent—a Force, of which the changes in the physical universe are the phases and the embodiments, but which yet itself in its deepest essence is incapable of change. It subsists everywhere and always; the lowliest and the loftiest processes of nature equally manifest its power. It is not simply primal but

basal. To seek it we do not need to go back in search of an absolute beginning; every movement of the existing universe is as much an expression of it as if for the first time it were forming that universe. In each tremor of a nerve, in each weaving of a tissue, in each motion of a limb, in each perception of an organ, we find ourselves perpetually in the presence of a Power which we do not comprehend, but which yet comprehends us and encloses our entire being.

The question now is, What bearing has all this upon the possibility of man's contact with the object of his worship. It has this important bearing, that it shows the theory of evolution to be corroborative of such a possibility. The Force which Mr Herbert Spencer places at the summit and base of things is not indeed an object of theistic worship, but it has this much in common with the God of theism, that it is a Power which transcends nature. Here then is the remarkable concession of a point, and that the fundamental point, on which the new faith can live with the old. The Book of Genesis says that through the possession of a common image there is a possibility of contact between the human and the Divine. Has modern science negatived that assertion? Has the increasing breadth of our knowledge of nature contributed so to dwarf our human consciousness as to make the possibility of Divine con-

tact a dream? On the contrary, the distinctive doctrine of evolution is the unity of species, or to speak more accurately, the unity of nature. The distinctive doctrine of evolution is the belief that at the root of all things there dwells a common principle, and that the many are ultimately reducible to the one. With singular clearness and with unfaltering conviction has that belief been expressed by Mr Herbert Spencer. No man insists so strongly on the incomprehensible nature of the Power at the base of the universe, yet no man so confidently maintains the necessity that this Power should comprehend *us*. To Mr Spencer the contact of the transcendental principle with the life of man is no longer a possibility; it is an accomplished fact. The God of Mr Herbert Spencer, far short as He comes of the idea of Christian theism, is identical with the God of Christian theism in this, that He is a Presence not outside of the world but in the world. The most essential attribute about Him is just His omnipresence. He does not create the world and die; He does not form the spheres and leave them to spin; He is every moment the cause of all existence, the reality of all being, and the source of all movement: the world only lives because He lives.

Now we have no hesitation in saying that the doctrine of evolution as here represented is in our view much more favourable to the belief in a

contact between the human and the Divine than were those systems of Gnosticism which are commonly thought to have been that doctrine's special allies. The statement may appear highly paradoxical, and it is certainly contrary to the general view. We are told again and again by advanced thinkers that the faith in a community of image between God and man is a faith which is superannuated. It was all very well for the days in which the human spirit believed itself to be capable by flights of ecstasy of rising beyond material conditions; but it is surely inadmissible in an age in which material conditions are more and more discerned as inseparable from the soul. Such is the current language of advanced thought on this subject. We hold, on the contrary, that were the doctrine of evolution proved to be true, whatever effect it might have upon other doctrines of theology it would extend at least a friendly hand to this. We hold that, just in proportion as it destroyed the basis of Gnosticism, it would strengthen our faith in the possibility of a union with God. Gnosticism, the so-called ally of that doctrine, is in our opinion its greatest enemy and gainsayer. For, what is that on which Gnosticism insists as a preliminary condition to the knowledge of God? it is nothing less than the destruction of human nature itself. It demands a state of ecstasy in which the soul shall rise out of its own being. It

asks the abandonment of sense, body, physical perception, worldly contact, social intercourse, individual personality. It declares that in so far as man is a denizen of the earth, he cannot be a citizen of the heavens, and that his only chance of communion with the Divine is to emancipate himself completely from the memories of the human: what is this, but to say that man is not made in the image of God?

But the doctrine of evolution, as represented by its leading apostle, is altogether the reverse of this. It denies, indeed, that man has in him a transcendental faculty—that is to say, a faculty by which he can commune with things beyond the range of experience. In this denial, the doctrine of evolution may be right or wrong; it is not here our province to inquire. But we wish to point out that, as represented by Mr Spencer, this doctrine has restored with the left hand what it abstracted with the right. It denies that man has a transcendental faculty, but it holds that his every natural faculty comes from a transcendental source. It denies that we have power, by crucifying the present world, to come into contact with a supersensuous world; but it holds that our contact with the present world itself is the direct and immediate result of the contact of our souls with a supersensuous principle. It is not difficult to see that a doctrine like this, while it seemingly curtails the

boundary of the supernatural, has in reality a tendency to enlarge that boundary. Denying as it does the position of Gnosticism, that there exists in the human soul a faculty which transcends the human, it has yet assigned to that soul a wider field for the supernatural than Gnosticism ever opened—the field of humanity itself. It has admitted with Gnosticism that there is a Power which transcends nature; but it asserts that its transcendence is discerned *in* nature. It recognises, like Gnosticism, the presence of an incomprehensible principle; but it professes to have recognised that presence in the vision of those common things which appeal to the experience and the sense. Is it not evident that, in so doing, the doctrine of evolution has given back more than it took away? If it has denied that there is any special faculty by which man can learn the existence of a Power which transcends experience, it has only made that denial in the interest of all his other faculties. It claims for every power of human nature what Gnosticism only claimed for one. It tells us that we are so beset by the presence and the manifestation of this inscrutable Force in nature, that we have no need of a special faculty to inform us of its existence; that every power of the human soul in every moment of its being is compelled to testify to the being of a Power which limits its own; and that the very re-

cognition of the limits of our experience is itself the recognition of a principle which transcends ourselves.

And this brings us naturally to ask, What, scientifically, is man's special claim to have been made in the image of God? Mr Spencer tells us that there is an inscrutable Force in contact with all phenomena—nay, constituting by its contact the existence of all phenomena. So far, then, scientific experience is on the side of religious experience; it asserts that the Power which transcends nature is yet not divided from nature—and that therefore there is no inherent impossibility in the earthly bearing the image of the heavenly. Yet the very fact that this contact is universal, renders it insufficient to constitute the special claim of man. To say that God is manifested in every movement of the universe is an argument for Divine providence, but it is not an argument for any peculiar privilege conferred upon the human soul. If I am asked, What is your evidence that you as a human being possess a special likeness to the Power which transcends nature? it will not do for me to answer that I have proved this Power to be resident and operative in everything. Such an argument, if not supplemented by any other consideration, would lead to the very opposite conclusion from that which I seek to establish; it would prove that every creature is equally and simul-

taneously in possession of the image of God. If man is to make out any claim to be in any peculiar sense the recipient of a Divine likeness, it can only be maintained on the ground that there is in him not only the manifestation but the distinctive essence of the transcendental Power in a way that it does not exist in the other objects of creation.

Can man make out this claim? To answer that question, let us first inquire whether, by the admission of the evolution theory, there is any fact regarding the transcendental Power in nature which has come to the knowledge of man? It must be answered that there is — the fact that that Power *is* transcendental. To know that God transcends experience is to know something about Him. We have already seen that the idea of something which transcends experience is an idea which the human mind cannot possibly escape. We have seen that this idea comes to us, not in the study of any abstruse branch of science or philosophy, but in the perception of the most common objects, and in the walk of the most everyday experience. We have seen that neither by the supposition of atheism nor by the hypothesis of an eternally existing universe can man rid himself of the thought that what he calls physical nature is not the limit of actual existence. Go where he may, and adopt what theory he will, he is sooner or later confronted by the

adamantine wall and the barred gate, which remind him at once of his own finitude, and of the finitude of those things in which he has proposed to place his trust. Not by following the path of irreligion can he escape that conclusion which is reached by the path of faith—that there is a world which transcends the limits of human thought, and a law which is not comprehended in the laws of human experience.

It is not, therefore, only in the system of Mr Herbert Spencer that we are obliged to recognise the existence of a force which is inscrutable. The same conclusion must be reached in one form or other, not only by the theory of every system, but by the experience of every life. But now let us consider what this amounts to. It seems a light thing, it seems even a humiliating thing, to say that man has arrived at the knowledge of a limit to his powers; it is, in truth, one of the most important and one of the most flattering concessions which can be made to human nature. No one can discover a limit to his present powers without being himself already in advance of these powers; for it is only by his effort to pass beyond them that he can ever find their boundaries to be a prison. To say, therefore, that man has arrived at the knowledge of a limit to his powers, is simply equivalent to saying that man has arrived at the knowledge that there exists a world of possibilities

incommensurable by human experience; in finding the limit of nature he has reached the idea of a transcendental Power.

But now, how has he reached this idea? Let us call to mind that principle with which we started at the beginning of the present chapter—the principle that like can only be known by like. Man only knows that which is at some point already in contact with his nature, and he only knows it because it is, and in so far as it is, in such contact. Knowledge is ever the proof of affinity, and the impossibility of knowledge can only be based upon the absence of affinity. Whence, then, has man derived his discovery of the limit to his own powers, or, which is the same thing, his discovery that there is something which transcends his powers? His knowledge, as we have seen, is given in experience, but it is certainly not given *by* experience. Experience, as such, cannot extend beyond the moment, cannot suggest any thought not involved in the impression of the hour. Man is not distinguished from the other objects of the earthly creation by the fact that he has a limited experience, but he is distinguished from them by the fact that he alone is aware of its limits. So far as the range of actual sense extends, it cannot be said that he has the advantage over the beast of the field or the bird of the air. But what distinguishes him from the beast

of the field and the bird of the air is the fact that, with outward perceptions in many cases more limited than they, he has arrived at a perception which they have never arrived at—the knowledge that he *is* limited. It is this which constitutes, and must ever constitute, the distinctiveness of man. The value of the discovery lies not in the discovery itself. To reach the conviction that we are circumscribed and narrowed on every side is not in itself a boon; the unconsciousness of the animal creation would, were there nothing more than this, be infinitely preferable. But then there is something more than this. The discovery of man's limitation, like many other discoveries, derives its value, not from what it is, but from what it proves. It is apparently the awakening of the human soul to the sense of its own impotence; it is really its awakening to the sense of its own greatness. In finding the limit to his nature, man has already overstepped the boundary, and planted his feet upon a transcendental world. In discovering the barrier to his knowledge, he has reached the knowledge that there is a law of life and of being beyond the range of finite experience; to know that his experience is transcended, is to know that there is something which transcends it. How has man acquired that knowledge? If like can only be known by like, if there must be an affinity of nature between the revelation and the being to

whom it is revealed, the question can admit of but one reply. Man has reached the knowledge that there is something which transcends nature, because that which transcends nature is already existent within him; he has arrived at the conviction that there is a Power beyond the limits of his experience, because he himself has already in thought surpassed these limits, and recognised his relationship to the Power of the universe.

CHAPTER V.

CREATION AND EVOLUTION.

IN the course of the foregoing chapters we seem to have arrived at a definite result, a result which, if established, will itself constitute only a fresh beginning. We have reached the conclusion that the ancient hope of man in the possibility of a Divine knowledge is not a superannuated hope, not a belief which has been outgrown by the progress of modern research and the advance of modern civilisation. We have found that, so far from being destroyed by the spirit of Agnosticism, it has recognised in the spirit of Agnosticism a real, though an unconscious, ally. We have seen that the beginning of man's knowledge of God is just the sense of his ignorance of God, that his first recognition of a world which transcends his own is reached in the perception that his own world is bounded: it is from the limits of his nature that he has derived the thought of a region which is supernatural. This thought, however,

derived as it has been from the discovery of human feebleness, and suggested as it is by the very spirit of negation, is, now that it has been found, a real and positive fact of knowledge. In reaching the conception that there is a life which transcends experience, man has himself already transcended his experience and claimed an affinity with that life. He could not entertain for a moment the idea of a Power which goes beyond the conditions of his earthly being, if he were not in some sense himself beyond them. His recognition of a transcendental element—nay, his very aspiration to recognise such an element—is a proof that already he is greater potentially than he is actually, and that the range of his human susceptibilities surpasses the extent of his earthly possessions.

But we have now to observe that, if we are willing to concede so much, we must of necessity concede more; this end, as we have said, is only a new beginning. If there be a Power which transcends the order of nature, and if man has arrived at the knowledge of this transcendence, he has arrived at that knowledge through an affinity of his own being to the being of the transcending Power. Whence has man derived this affinity? Let the fact of its existence be granted, and there can be only one answer; he must have derived it from an impartation made by the Power itself.

But in making such a statement we have already passed from theory into history, from the philosophising about the nature of God to a positive affirmation regarding the acts of God. To say that, in any sense, either man or any other creature of the universe is possessed of the Divine image, is to say that there has already taken place in the universe an act of creation, an act by which God has imparted Himself, communicated Himself, shared Himself. It is, therefore, in strict logical sequence with the foregoing subject that we pass from the possibility of Divine knowledge to the asserted fact of Divine creation. If man *can* know God, he can only know Him on the ground of an affinity of nature, and he can only claim an affinity of nature on the ground that God has imparted Himself to his own soul.

We must now, therefore, proceed to ask with regard to the doctrine of creation the same question which we have asked concerning the possibility of Divine knowledge—Is it compatible with modern science? There are two words which in our days are constantly opposed—creation and evolution. The one is regarded as the watchword of a theological past, the other is viewed as the symbol of the scientific present. But it is not merely the words that are placed in antithesis; it is the things which they signify. The idea of creation is supposed to be incompatible with the

idea of evolution, and the process of evolution is held to be a disproof of the act of creation. It is said that the very conception of evolution implies that something has been eternal. To suppose an absolute beginning of all things, is to suppose that the first existence began to be by a totally different process from the evolution process. On this account Mr Herbert Spencer does not hesitate to deny "an absolute commencement of anything."[1] He feels that to assume the coming into existence of a first principle is virtually to reject the evolution theory as an adequate explanation of the universe; and in this view we agree with him. But we have already pointed out that Mr Spencer will here experience no opposition from the theist. The theist does not, any more than he, accept the possibility of an absolute beginning. He, like Mr Spencer, believes that the primal force which underlies the universe is eternal, only he gives to that force the name and attribute of personality. Whatever difference lies between the creationist and the evolutionist, this at least does not constitute one of its elements. The evolutionist speaks of an evolving principle, and the creationist speaks of a creative principle; but they both alike insist that the principle must be eternal. Nay, they both alike insist on something more—

[1] See the letter appended to the first part of his 'Principles of Biology.'

that the principle shall itself be free from the changes which it originates. The Force of Mr Herbert Spencer, evolving, as it does, all other forces, is itself unchangeable; the God of natural theology, creating as He does all other existences, is Himself immutable. So far the two systems are at one.

We are ourselves disposed to go further. It seems to us that the theological doctrine of creation does not necessarily demand even that the matter of the world should have had a beginning at all. We pointed out that there are three conceivable views which may be taken of the world's origin; we may either say that it began by chance, or that it began by creative Intelligence, or that it never began. In estimating the value of these alternatives, we have already stated our opinion that the two last are not mutually exclusive. It is possible to hold that the world owes its existence entirely to the creative power of God, and yet at the same time to maintain that the world had no historical beginning: this was the view of Plato in pre-Christian days, and of Clement and Origen in the bosom of the Christian Church itself. We see a ray of light emanating from the sun, and we say that the ray of light owes its being to the sun. If it were proved that there never was a time in which that ray had not existed, it would not in the slightest degree shake our conclusion

that it owes its existence to the sun. What makes it a created or dependent object is not the fact that at one time it began to be, but the fact that at every time it is simply an emanation—that it has not at any moment of its being a spark of heat or light which it does not derive from its contact with that source from which it radiates. There is therefore no necessary antagonism between the doctrine of a Divine creation and the doctrine of a world whose matter had no historical beginning. The theist holds that the matter of the world has a perpetual beginning *out of* history. He holds that in every moment of its existence the world is a created work. He does not look upon it as something which God once made, but which now supports itself; he views it as something which has never been able for an instant to support itself, which is indebted for its every hour of being to the creative will of another, and which, had it even no historical beginning, can never be viewed as aught but the product of a higher power.

There is not, then, any antecedent incompatibility between the claims of evolution and the claims of creation. They are both at one in holding that there never has been an absolute beginning—that there never was a time in which some power did not exist. We go on, therefore, to ask whether this alleged incompatibility lies in

the distinctive natures of the two systems themselves. Is there anything in the definition of the word "evolution" which renders it an opposite conception to the idea involved in the word "creation"? Perhaps we shall best arrive at a solution of this question by placing side by side the two most representative systems of creationism and evolutionism—the system of the Book of Genesis and the system of Mr Herbert Spencer.

Mr Herbert Spencer gives the following definition of the word "evolution": "Evolution is an integration of matter and concomitant dissipation of motion, during which the matter passes from an indefinite incoherent homogeneity to a definite coherent heterogeneity, and during which the retained motion undergoes a parallel transformation."[1] The first thing to which we have here to direct our attention is the word "during." This word marks something which is frequently supposed to denote the opposite of creation; we mean the fact that evolution is not an act but a process. It indicates that the formation of this world was not something which was begun and ended in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, but something which was elaborated step by step, and wrought out day by day. Such a difference between the conception of nature as a sudden emergence into being, and the conception of nature

[1] First Principles, § 145, chap. xvii. p. 396.

as a gradual growth and development, has been always supposed to mark the distinction between the ancient and the modern spirit,—between the ages when man thought unscientifically and the age when he has begun to think on the lines of science.

Nor is the supposition, in its essence, an erroneous one. The ancient conception of creative power was certainly the conception of a force acting instantaneously, and the force was considered to be grandly manifested just in proportion to its instantaneousness. But this only serves to render more conspicuous one prominent exception to the rule—the narrative of the Book of Genesis. Here is confessedly the most majestic description of creative power ever given by the pen of man. Yet here, in the most ancient of times, we find an anticipation, not indeed of modern science, but of that spirit which led to modern science—the tendency to view nature as a process. Let us suppose that for the first time the opening chapter of Genesis had now been revealed to the eyes of the world. Let us suppose that, instead of being the best-known fact of literature, it had been suddenly and unexpectedly discovered in our own days amidst the archives of the past. Let us further imagine that it presented itself to our view not with any claim to inspiration which might create an adverse bias in the scientific

mind, but simply and solely as the product of an ancient literary era, and as the work of a speculative mind. We ask, What would in scientific circles be the first impression created by such a discovery? It would be one of mingled respect and wonder. It would be respect for a speculative power which had come so much nearer to the modern spirit than all contemporary literatures, and it would be wonder that in so primitive an age such a view of nature should have been entertained. The revelation made to the scientific mind would be a revelation of the fact, that in a period of remote antiquity, in an age of primitive culture, in a day when the very elements of science were unknown, there had lived a man who had not been afraid to say that the creation of the world had not been an act but a process,—who had dared to affirm, in opposition to all his predecessors, and in contrast with all his contemporaries, that the method by which the world was made was a method slow and gradual, rising from the smallness of first beginnings, and adding quality to quality, until it reached in the fulness of time the symmetry of a completed whole.

Nor would the wonder of the scientific mind be lessened by the reflection that the author of this remarkable poem was a Hebrew. The knowledge of his origin would increase beyond measure the marvel. It would be seen that for a Hebrew to

say that the creation of the earth was gradual, was not a natural thing—not a thing to be expected from the tendency of his religion. The tendency of his religion is well known to have been in the opposite direction — towards, we do not say an exaggerated *view*, but an exaggerated *expression* of the power of God. The leading article of the Hebrew's creed was just the doctrine of Divine power, just the belief that there reigned in the heavens One whose will was omnipotent, whose mandate was irresistible, and from whose sentence there could be no appeal. The wonder would be that to a man holding such a view of God, the notion of a gradual creation should ever for a moment have suggested itself. The writer of the first chapter of Genesis, in attributing to God a six days' work of creation, did certainly not believe that he was thereby recording the marvellous rapidity of His working; it would have been more natural for Him to say that God made the world in six seconds. The fact that he did not say so—the fact that, contrary to the genius of his religion, he described the creative work of God as extending through evenings and mornings—is a proof that there must have been in his mind some sense of scientific congruity, which led him to keep in abeyance the spontaneous national instinct.

It may be said, however, that the narrative of creation, as given in the first chapter of Genesis,

is, after all, the narrative of a creative power which acts by its own absolute will without the intervention of intermediate or secondary means. If it be so, we shall indeed be driven to conclude that this narrative of creation is incompatible with the doctrine of scientific evolution. The doctrine of evolution, in whatever form it may be cast, is built on the recognition of the fact that the world was formed through the agency of material means, and any system of creation which denies the intervention of such means is shut out on the threshold from all comparison with it, and from all possibility of alliance.

But is it so? Is the doctrine of creation, as exhibited in the first chapter of Genesis, the doctrine of an absolute Power acting by His own mandate, and dispensing with the use of any intermediate agency? We have no hesitation in saying that this is not the view of the subject which the writer of the first chapter of Genesis intends to convey. We admit, indeed, that his language would at first suggest such an impression of his meaning, but it is not difficult to explain why his language *must* have done so. Let us remember that, however much he may have been above the level of his contemporaries, this man, after all, *was* a Hebrew. Let us remember that, to the Hebrew race from the very beginning of their religious history, the presence of God was a universal

presence. His God was not a being who came forth only in great catastrophes, and revealed Himself only in striking judgments; He acted everywhere and always, in the little alike as in the great, in the falling of a sparrow as powerfully as in the shaking of an empire. Hence for every event of life, however it might be produced, the Hebrew had one formula, "God said." He saw in everything the product of the will, the work of the hand, of God; and he admitted the co-operation of no second cause.[1] But that is a very different thing from saying that he recognised the action of no material agency. The Hebrew acknowledged no second causes—not because he denied the action of material agencies, but because he held these agencies themselves to be only the instruments of God; he refused to recognise their *co-operation*, but he never for a moment doubted their *service*. So far was the Hebrew from denying that the will of God could operate through material servants, that, in point of fact, he did not admit any other form of Divine operation. He did not acknowledge that God ever did reveal Himself directly to the human soul. It was only through His agents that God ever spoke to man. When He desired to commune with the human, He had to make the winds His messengers, and the flaming fires His ministers. That the Eternal should meet face to

[1] See this especially illustrated in Psalm xxix.

face with His creatures, was a thought which the Hebrew could not conceive. No man could see God and live, nor could the course of history progress in the unveiled presence of God. To meet the face of man, to conduct the events of history, the Eternal had to veil His presence—had to clothe Himself in the garments of time—had to speak in the language of men,—had to employ the agency of material things.

It will be seen from this that the modern conception of evolution, as expressed in the definition of Mr Herbert Spencer, does not necessarily differ from the ancient view of creation as regards the agency of material means. The system of Mr Spencer looks upon the process of evolution as something which is effected through the operation of physical forces; the system of creation delineated by the writer of Genesis, does not contain anything which either expressly or implicitly precludes the operation of such forces. Thus far our investigation has already led us. But now we must ask if, from a study of the document before us, we are not entitled to go further. We have said that there is nothing in the first chapter of Genesis which precludes the view of the evolution principle that the formation of the world is effected through the intervention of material forces; does an examination of this chapter not warrant us to say more? We have seen that in other parts of

the Hebrew Scriptures the action of God in the affairs of men is uniformly represented as a mediate action,—as something which works through finite instruments. If we look at the narrative of this chapter, we shall find that the initial and creative act of God is no exception to the rule. It is a mistake to imagine that, even in form, the Hebrew narrative of creation is simply the record of a work which was effected without agencies by the imperative mandate of an omnipotent will. As a matter of fact, the mandate is not the first thing, but the agency. Before God says, "Let there be light," it is very significantly stated that the Spirit or breath of God moved upon the face of the waters. We say that the statement is significant, because it implies more than it expresses. It introduces at the very beginning something which is intermediate between the Worker and His work; and, by introducing this intermediate agency at the beginning, it evidently designs to signify that its action was to pervade the whole creation from its opening to its closing day. It evidently intends to suggest that the world was not produced merely by the word of God's mouth, nor by the mandate of His will, but that it owed its being to the co-operation of His will with the action of certain forces which the breath of His Spirit had set into motion.

For this leads us to ask, What was this primitive,

intermediate agency which, according to the Book of Genesis, originated the present system of things? We should naturally have expected that this very ancient and unscientific document, if it had intended to allow God's creative act to operate through any intermediate agency, would have declared this agency to be matter. But the agency which is postulated by the Book of Genesis is not matter, but force,—"The Spirit of God *moved* upon the face of the waters." This ancient assertion sounds singularly modern and specially Spencerian. Mr Herbert Spencer himself holds that the origin of all things is force, or that which has power to produce movement. It may be said, indeed, that Mr Spencer's force is physical, while that evoked by the writer of Genesis is confessedly spiritual. It must be remembered, however, that in the view of Mr Spencer force is not physical at all; it is, in its ultimate nature, perfectly inscrutable. We speak popularly of material forces. The expression is not inapplicable when it is intended to describe the movements of matter; but when it is used to indicate the cause of that motion, it is, in the view of Mr Spencer, a simple metaphor. Mr Spencer does not admit that we have yet discovered the agent of what we call physical motion, and least of all does he admit that we have discovered this agent in matter. Nor does Mr Spencer stand alone in claiming for the idea of force an

origin outside the boundaries of what we designate matter. It is not too much to say that he is followed in this view by the majority of evolutionists, and that his majority is constantly increasing. Science has been called materialistic; yet science in its most advanced form does not even allow to matter those powers which are commonly supposed to be peculiarly its own. In one sense the modern doctrine of evolution comes nearer to the theological standpoint than most of its scientific predecessors. The theologian believes that matter has no powers of its own, that all its properties have been impressed upon it by an omnipotent Will. The modern evolutionist also believes that matter has no powers of its own; and although, as a man of science, he will not commit himself to assign to these powers an origin, he confesses, along with the theologian, that they are impressed upon matter from a source which transcends experience.

The statement of the Book of Genesis, that the formative principle of the universe was movement, is, in that early age, a very remarkable doctrine. That movement should have preceded the existence of light is not a natural supposition, not a supposition in accordance with the appearance of things. Yet this is one of the few statements of antiquity concerning the constitution of physical nature which modern science has not reversed. As a matter of fact, we now know not only that

movement preceded the existence of light, but that light would never have had any existence if movement had not preceded it; that light owes its ultimate origin neither to the sun nor to any other luminary, but to those movements or vibrations of ether which are necessary to the existence of all suns and of all luminaries. And what is scientifically true of light is scientifically true of matter as a whole. It seems to us, that so far is matter from being able to explain its own movement, that the movement is itself required to account for the existence of matter. All matter presupposes force as a condition of its being. If matter possesses force inherently, where does it lie? Does it lie in the masses of solid bodies? These masses are themselves kept together by a force of cohesion; force is the cause, and not the effect, of their being. Does it lie in those minute atoms which are supposed to constitute the ultimate material elements? We maintain that even these presuppose the existence of force. If an atom has any size at all, its magnitude is just as much held together by a force of cohesion as is the magnitude of the densest masses; and if it is altogether without size, then matter has vanished away and force reigns supreme. On these grounds we are constrained to hold that the earliest and most representative statement of the doctrine of creation has in one of its main positions been borne out and homologated by the latest view of the doctrine of evolution.

Alike in the system of Mr Herbert Spencer and in the system of him who wrote the first chapter of the Book of Genesis, the primal agency from which the world originated was not matter but movement. The difference between them does not lie here; it lies in their view of that agency which moves. Mr Spencer, admitting, as he does and must, that movement requires a mover, is yet unwilling to commit himself to a definition of that power whose existence and action he acknowledges; the writer of Genesis, influenced, perhaps, by the reflection that the power exhibited by nature is an exhibition of his own image, is not afraid to define the agency which creates that power as a spiritual intelligence manifesting the attributes of personality and revealing the prerogatives of will.

Let us now return to Mr Spencer's definition of evolution. We have seen that in two respects it does not differ from that conception which is commonly called the system of creation. In holding the formation of the earth to have been not an act but a process, it is in harmony with that old narrative of Genesis which, in spite of the writer's natural temptation to accelerate the action of God, was not ashamed to represent Him as working out His purpose by slow and progressive stages. In holding, again, that the process by which the formation was effected was the subjection of matter to the action of certain movements,

it is once more in harmony with a narrative which places at the basis of all things the movement of a mighty force, by which the earth was fashioned into order in the fulness of the days.

But if we resume a study of Mr Spencer's definition, we shall find that the parallel between them is yet more pronounced and significant. What is the nature of that transition which, according to Mr Spencer, the earth undergoes under the action of the formative force? Let us quote his own words. He says, "Evolution is an integration of matter and concomitant dissipation of motion, during which the matter passes from an indefinite incoherent homogeneity to a definite coherent heterogeneity." There are three things which, in the view of Mr Spencer, are here said to have constituted the characteristics of the primitive or unformed matter of the earth. First, it was indefinite; it was of such a confused nature that nothing could be affirmed concerning it. Secondly, it was incoherent: its parts did not cling together; they wanted the bond of connection which now makes them one. Thirdly, it was homogeneous: it had no distinction in its qualities; all its present varieties constituted originally one liquid mass, which at once enclosed and concealed its future possibilities. Now, if we turn to the first chapter of Genesis, we shall not fail to be struck with the fact that the primitive matter of the earth

is there represented as having occupied a similar, if not an identical position. Here, too, we have three distinct affirmations made as to the state of the unformed world. We are first told that it was without form; in other words, that it was indefinite—that its various parts had not been so limited as to render their proportions discernible. We are next informed that it was void; in other words, that it was incoherent—that its various parts had not been so joined as to make them a solid unity. We are finally made aware that it was comprehensible under a single name, the deep; in other words, that it was homogeneous—that its various parts were prevented from displaying their variety by the fact that each and all of them were enveloped in a mass of water.

These, then, according to the Book of Genesis, were the primitive elements of the unformed world, and the elements out of which that world was to be constructed. Let us ask now, not what was to be the *process* of construction, but what was to be the plan of construction. The process lies as much beyond the discerning power of the evolutionist as it transcends the mind of him who adheres to the system of creationism. But evolution in the person of Mr Herbert Spencer has traced out retrospectively the work actually achieved, and he has expressed the result in the very formula of his definition. He finds that the primitive matter

existed in three states—indefiniteness, incoherence, and homogeneity. He finds that the work of the evolution principle has been the transformation of these states into their contraries; the indefinite has become defined, the incoherent has become coherent, the homogeneous has become heterogeneous. We have found that the opening chapter of Genesis exhibits the primitive matter in precisely the same conditions; it is without form or indefinite, it is void or incoherent, and it exhibits the homogeneous character of a liquid deep. If we look at the creative principle as represented in this chapter, we shall find that the work achieved by it is precisely that work which, in the view of Mr Spencer, has been achieved by the principle of evolution—the transformation of these states into their contraries. Here, too, the indefinite becomes the defined, and that which was without form assumes a distinctive symmetry. Here, too, the incoherent becomes the coherent, and that which revealed the presence of voidness or emptiness fills up its vacant spaces, and constitutes a united creation. Here, too, above all, because including all, the homogeneous becomes the heterogeneous; and those qualities whose differences were indistinguishable through their absorption in a liquid element, emerge from the deep that overwhelms them, and reveal the varieties of their being.

This is a far more important consideration than

the question to which apologists, in reviewing the opening chapter of Genesis, have usually directed their attention—the question whether the six days of creation correspond in the order of their narratives to the periods recorded by evolution. Believing, as we do, and as, indeed, is generally conceded, that there is a substantial agreement in the main features of each record, we are yet of opinion that the discovery of such a harmony is a very secondary advantage. It has never seemed to us that the dignity of this narrative of creation lay in its being an almanac. We have always held that, apart altogether from questions of its authorship, it ought to be interpreted as the visions of the prophets are interpreted; in other words, to be classed with those portions of Jewish literature whose mission was to teach in symbols. It describes the work of creation as the work of creation would have appeared to a beholder.[1] It does not enter into the delineation of internal processes; it does not describe what goes on underground. To the writer of this chapter the object only becomes a creation when it becomes capable of being seen—in other words, when it reaches the surface. There is no description of the germ-cells of things, whether in the world of vegetal or in the world of animal life, or in that world—if such there be—

[1] This, as is well known, is the view advocated by Hugh Miller in his 'Testimony of the Rocks.'

which originally comprehended both in one. We have no record of the time when marine plants began to be, nor of the hour when the first and most primitive forms of animal life originated in the depths of ocean. This writer measures creation, not by scientific analysis, but by the glance of his eye; and he only records what is commensurate with the record of the eye. The marine plants are left out of view because they *are* out of view; the primitive life-forms in the depths of ocean are disregarded by reason of the depth at which they dwell. The vegetation which he beholds is the visible vegetation which emerges from the surface of the land; the animated forms which he describes are the forms which float on the surface of the waters, or occupy the crust of the earth, or fly in the open vault of heaven. By the time these objects have reached his eye, they are already distinctly separated from one another; each is "after its kind." Yet that man would be deceived who should thence conclude that the writer of Genesis meant by anticipation to refute the theory of Darwinism, or to prove the original diversity of species. There is no thought in his mind either of establishing an original diversity or of proving an original unity; he describes the creation of each form neither in its process nor in its progress, but simply in its visible completeness. His eye is directed exclusively to the *end* of the process. In

the true spirit of Hebraism, he sees that whatever has been the latest result must have been the earliest Divine thought, the design for which the work was planned and fashioned. In the spirit of the same Hebraism he sees that, however protracted this latest result may have been, it must be viewed as to all intents and purposes an immediate product of the sovereign Will. Therefore it is that, in recording the annals of creation, he is content to leave out of view the steps which intervene between the fiat and its fulfilment, and proceeds at once to connect the end with the beginning,—"he Lord said; and it was so."

On these grounds, then, we do not regard the establishment of a strict historical parallel between the six days of creation and the many periods of evolution as a matter of much consequence. But, as we have said, it is a point of far more importance to determine whether the principle on which the six days' creation was conducted be identical with that principle on which the lines of evolution have proceeded. We have found, without any theorising and without any need of subtle disquisition, that it has actually been so. We have seen that the simple statement of the narrative bears witness to the fact that the idea contemplated by the writer of Genesis in describing the work of creation was to delineate its progress "from an indefinite incoherent homogeneity to a definite

coherent heterogeneity." And when we proceed from the simple statement of that original condition from which matter was to be raised, to consider the actual description of the steps by which it *was* raised, we find that every one of these steps is a fresh progress towards Mr Spencer's ideal. We find that at every stage of the creative process the homogeneous is passing more and more into the character of the heterogeneous—in other words, that things which originally were indistinguishable from one another are breaking up from their primitive unity and assuming diversities of structure. There is first a division in that darkness which broods over the face of the great deep; the Divine breath moves upon the waters, and those forces of nature begin to play which result in the production of electrical light.[1] By-and-by the darkness is yet more thoroughly broken, as the constitution of the globe is developed into the susceptibility of receiving the influence of the solar beams. There is next a breaking up of the great deep itself, and that in two directions—from above and from within. In the process of condensation the aqueous are separated from the metallic vapours, and a canopy of clouds is formed: there is seen a dividing firmament in the midst of the waters. But in the heart of the earth itself there is going on another

[1] Electricity would be produced by the contact between the water of the sea and the internal fire of the globe.

dividing process which is not less potent and not less important. The solid masses which have been accumulating through condensation are gradually upheaved from the depths towards the surface of the waters. At first they are only upheaved in order to be engulfed again; but by degrees their strength is so consolidated as to resist with success the encroachment of the subterranean element; the division of earth and firmament is followed by the division of land and sea. Then comes the division of the land itself. At first it seems to be homogeneous, capable of producing only one form of objects; but this original appearance is soon to be superseded. The homogeneous earth breaks forth into varieties, and each variety is marked by a more distinct individuality. Life as it appears on the surface of the earth ascends by a series of stages from the carboniferous flora to the primal man, and at each stage the separation of the life from the element out of which it was taken becomes more complete and more indubitable. In the ascent from the herb yielding seed after its kind to the life that is made in the image of God, we have a series of transitions from homogeneity into heterogeneity in which the individual form becomes more and more individualistic, and asserts more and more its difference from surrounding things.

We are now, however, brought to the threshold

of a question which lies at the very basis of the evolution principle, and is supposed also to lie at the basis of the narrative of Genesis. We have spoken of a series of transitions which are involved in the description of the six days' creation; the question is, What is the nature of these transitions? Is each of them to be regarded as a special creative act, calling into life a new order of being? The entrance of each of them upon the stage of time is prefixed by the words "The Lord said." Does this mean that each stage of creation is a completed act, which has no power to propagate itself, but which must wait for another fiat to find a step *above* itself. If so, then the system of creation involved in the first chapter of Genesis is really the history of a *series* of creations. Now the modern doctrine of evolution distinctly declares that such a conception cuts at the very root of its principle. It says that to introduce a succession of special acts, each one of which arises from the mandate of a creative will, is in so many words to deny the truth of the evolution doctrine. It affirms that the evolution doctrine demands, before all other things, the admission that there exists in nature a principle of continuity — a principle by which one order of being is so closely linked to another that there is no room and no need for any power to intervene between the parts of the chain. It holds that the human has grown out of the ani-

mal, and that the animal has developed from the vegetable. Nay, the thorough-going evolutionist goes further. He cannot admit that life itself is a break in the universal chain, and in what we call the beginnings of life he refuses to see a beginning. He is not content to trace back the human to the animal, and the animal to the vegetable; he is disposed to hold that vegetable life is itself the link of a preceding chain, the result of a process of development which travels back into the indefinite past. The unity of species which he seeks is really a unity of *nature*. He will not be satisfied with finding that there is a community of life pervading the plant, the animal, and the man; he seeks to discover whether that community of nature which pervades the plant, the animal, and the man is not also common to the whole system of the universe. He desires to connect the man with the earth from which he sprung, to connect the earth from which he sprung with the solar system on which it is dependent, and to connect the solar system itself with the united system of the universe: in the ultimate and the lowest forms of matter he would find the promise and the potence of life. Such is the doctrine of evolution carried out to its last analysis—a doctrine whose tendency is ultimately to obliterate all varieties and reduce the many to the one. Whether the evidence for such a doctrine be strong or weak, it is no part of our

province here to determine; whether it be strong or weak in the facts which support it, it represents the goal to which is tending the spirit of modern science. The question which we have to consider is, How would the attainment of such a goal affect the belief of the theist? how would the demonstration, that all varieties were originally one, contribute to influence that religious sentiment which in all places and at all times has seen in the varieties of nature the evidence of a special creation? The consideration of this question must be reserved for the next chapter.

CHAPTER VI.

EVOLUTION AND SPECIAL CREATION.

THE preceding chapter led us to the conclusion that there is no necessary or essential opposition between the idea of evolution and the idea of creation in general. We found that even were it proved that there had been no historical beginning of the world, it would not in the smallest degree invalidate the theistic argument in favour of the world's Divine origin. We found that the idea of creation is not essentially connected with the thought of a historical beginning; that the devout believer in a creative Power believes the creative Power to be exerted in giving life to the universe every moment; and that the exertion of such an agency is not only compatible with, but is actually asserted by, the most pronounced form of the doctrine of evolution.

But if there is no opposition between the idea of evolution and the idea of creation in *general*, we have still to ask if there is no opposition between

the idea of evolution and the doctrine of a *special* creation. It is here that we are met by the theory which seems to decide the question against creationism almost without need of argument—the theory of the unity of species. This is the doctrine which commonly goes by the name of Darwinism, but which under this name seems to us to give a very limited view of the real scope of the evolutionist. Darwinism only professes to find the unity of *life;* evolution in its completed form aspires to find the unity of all things. The doctrine of the unity of species would at present be better indicated by the name of Spencerism than by that of Darwinism, for it is in the hands of Mr Spencer that it has assumed its largest proportions and sought to embrace in its law all existing things. The oneness of species which it here seeks is not simply the oneness of a germ-cell which may contain the seed common to the life of the plant, the animal, and the man; it is a unity which shall embrace within itself not only the life of the human, the animal, and the vegetable, but the life of all the products of nature in every department and in every variety. Such is the bold and far-reaching scheme which the doctrine of evolution ultimately contemplates, and to the prosecution and confirmation of which the science of our day is devoting its attention. We shall here pass by on the other side the consideration of what success it may or

may not have as yet achieved; we shall leave the determination of that to the judgment of the specialists. What we wish to consider is, the effect which would be produced upon theology by the establishment of such a doctrine. We wish to inquire whether, in the event of there being discovered the principle of unity which is here sought for, there would necessarily or logically follow any diminution of man's faith in the supernatural. We wish to ask calmly and dispassionately, and in the absence of all party interest, whether the contemplated reduction of the varieties of nature to a single species would, in the event of its being accomplished, impel the human mind to relinquish that belief in the superintendence of a guiding Power which in all the ages of history has been the support of the life of man.

In conducting this inquiry there are two questions which prominently rise before us, and which must be dealt with separately and consecutively. We must first ask whether, in the attempt to reduce all things to a principle of unity, the doctrine of evolution is in any sense peculiar, —whether it is really doing anything which in point of fact is not done by every other doctrine. Should we come on this subject to a negative answer, we shall have separated the aim of the evolutionist from any necessary alliance with an irreligious tendency. When we have decided this

point, we must next go on to ask whether the establishment of a belief in the absolute unity of species would tend logically to destroy our belief in the continued action of that Intelligence which is held to have been the primal Force in the creation of the world; in other words, whether the doctrine of evolution is in any respect less susceptible of union with the doctrine of a *special* creation, than we have found it to be susceptible of union with the doctrine of creation in general.

The first question, then, which meets us is this, Is the theory of the evolutionist peculiar in attempting to find for all things a common basis of unity? There is a popular impression that it is so. It is commonly believed that the doctrine of evolution, in its effort to reduce the many to the one, is performing an act distinctly revolutionary. There is a more widespread opinion still, that in this search for a unifying principle which shall reconcile the varieties of things, the evolutionist of our day is engaged in a work distinctively modern. The truth is, he is engaged precisely in that work which from the beginning of time has occupied the mind of every thoughtful man. There is not an age of the world's history, there is not a department of the world's intellectual life, in which the problem has not been identical with the problem which now exercises the scientific

mind — how to find that principle which shall make the many one. Go where we may in our study of human thought, we shall in all times and in all conditions be confronted by the same intellectual question which confronts us in the nineteenth century—the question whether it be possible to discover a single element of original life or being which may once have constituted the origin of all the various forms of life and all the diverse shades of being which now meet us in the universe.

The aim of the most ancient philosophy—the philosophy of Greece — was identical from the beginning with the aim of modern science. The earliest form of that philosophy is the school of Ionia, and the school of Ionia is based on the effort to discover an original principle from which all other things have taken their birth. Thales attempted to find the first principle of the universe in water, Anaximenes in air, Heraclitus in fire, and Anaximander in what he called the infinite, or that which was without shape or boundary. These attempts were fantastic enough; but that which concerns us here is the fact that they *were* attempts, the fact that men in a comparatively primitive age should have busied themselves with exactly the same problem which engages the attention of the modern scientist, and should in anticipation of the modern scientist have ventured

to entertain the idea that the many forms of nature were reducible to a single substance.

As we pass from the school of Ionia to the more developed forms of the Greek philosophy, we encounter systems differing widely from one another in their standpoint and in their doctrine, and presenting in many instances the aspect of direct contradiction. But through all these varieties and through all these contradictions there is one respect in which they are harmonious and agreed; they each and all of them aim at the solution of the same problem—the reduction of the many to the one. Pythagoras comes forward and tells us that the first principle of all things is number. Here, we should think at the outset, is a theory which would give the quietus to every effort after the discovery of a unity in nature. If there is one idea which more than another suggests infinite variety, it is the idea of number; it opens up to the imagination such a succession of possible existences, that the imagination is itself at last bewildered and compelled to relinquish the task of conceiving. One would have thought that the man who made number the cause of all things had in the very statement of his theory abandoned the search for the unity of species. Nevertheless it is in the idea of number that Pythagoras *finds* the unity of species—nay, it is for the sake of finding that unity that he has adopted this theory. He denies that,

in point of fact, the idea of number does involve variety. He maintains that, strictly speaking, there is only a single numerical figure—number 1. He declares that all the numbers in the universe are just so many multiplications of the unit; when we speak of ten thousand we really mean ten thousand times 1. The universe of Pythagoras is therefore a universe in which there is only one species,—and all the seeming varieties in its species are simply the re-echoings of the original note,[1] the multiplications of the original unity.

Then came the Eleatics, exhibiting a contrast in standpoint both to the Ionian and Pythagorean schools. The school of Ionia had sought the unity of nature in materialism, had tried to trace everything back to water, air, or fire. The school of Pythagoras had sought the unity of nature in number, had endeavoured to find the origin of everything in the multiplication of the unit by itself. The Eleatics revolted from both positions. They held that the first principle of all things was spirit, or, as they called it, being. They refused to believe that the forms of mere matter could ever be reduced to a unity, and therefore they refused to believe that the forms of mere matter had any real existence at all. The only thing which had real existence was mind, thought, intelligence, in-

[1] Pythagoras regards the universe as the harmony of a musical rhythm.

tellectual being. Here alone in the universe was to be found a principle of unity, because here alone was beheld a thing which could not be divided. The manifold was the unreal because it implied change and fleetingness. The reality of things must be sought in that which never changed and never revealed manifoldness, and it could only be discovered in the principle of spiritual existence. The Eleatic, therefore, differed in his philosophy from both the Ionic and the Pythagorean: these in the main were physicists, he was an idealist. But if he differed from them in his philosophy, he was at one with them in his method. He, like them, sought the origin of things, and, like them, he sought the origin of things in the life of a single species. He despaired of finding that species in the water, or the air, or the fire, or the abstract unit; he despaired of finding it in anything which now presents the aspect of variety. But when he turned from without to within, from the fleeting shadows of the visible to the self-conscious permanence of the spiritual, he recognised at last a principle which could account for even the shadows themselves. He recognised an element of unity which could explain at once the stability of the universe and its appearance of instability, just as the light of the sun reveals at once the unity of the solar beam and the manifold reflections which it is capable of producing. The world of spirituality,

the world of intellectual being, was to the Eleatic the principle of all things; and the unity of species which he sought was the reduction of all things to an element of life.

We shall mention one other philosophic system, because it is one which presents a seeming contradiction to the whole principle we have been here illustrating. The system to which we allude is that doctrine originally advanced by Democritus and afterwards elaborated by Epicurus, which under all its forms may be comprehended in the general name of Atomism. It differed from every preceding system in seeking the origin of things not in the one but in the many. Instead of declaring that the first principle was a single quantity, such as water, or air, or fire, or the germ of intelligence, it held that things originally sprang from an infinite multitude of first principles, each of which was called an atom. It would seem here as if the search for the unity of species were not only deserted but condemned; as if the new system of philosophy had discovered the effort of its predecessors to have been grounded on a mistake, and had hastened to rectify their error by the adoption of a diametrically opposite view. It would seem as if atomism had been mainly influenced by a recoil from that principle of evolution whose aim is to merge the many in the one, and had endeavoured to compensate for the past by instituting a contrary

problem—the attempt to merge the many in the infinitely multiplied. So it seems; but is it so? *Is* this new creed of atomism, indeed, a revolt from the old creeds of Thales and Pythagoras and Zeno? Is the system of Democritus and Epicurus in reality a recoil from that principle of evolution which had dominated the search of the Ionic and Eleatic schools? We maintain that it is not. We say, on the contrary, that the system of the atomists, so far from being a denial of the unity of species, is itself only another attempt to discover that unity by a new method. It is true that in this Epicurean doctrine the many and not the one are made the origin of the visible universe. It is true that what by former schools was assigned to a single agency is here assigned to an infinite number of agencies, and the place which heretofore was occupied by water, air, fire, or spirit, is now filled by myriads of minute atoms. But Democritus and his successor Epicurus go on to tell us something which alters the whole state of the case, and gives them their position again in the ranks of those who search for the unity of species. They tell us that these atoms, although infinite in number, are in quality indistinguishable from one another. Here is a remarkable statement—a statement which really brings us back to the conclusion arrived at by the Ionic, Eleatic, and Pythagorean schools. This so-called infinite number of atoms is after all declared to

constitute an identical existence. However infinite they may be in number, they are qualitatively the same; they belong to a single species, a single order of being. That which makes them the origin of the universe is really not their diversity, but their unity; their causative power is their power to work together, and their power to work together is that essential identity of their nature which makes it possible for them to combine.

Philosophy, then, is harmonious on this question, for these ancient systems are the representatives of all systems. It may be said, however, that although philosophy is at one with science in seeking an ultimate unity of species, religion is not. It may be said that science and philosophy, however much they may be at war with one another as to the nature of the ultimate species, have all along been united in the belief that there *is* an ultimate species, and that it is just this union which has made them at most times the allies against theology. We say, on the other hand, that in whatever respect philosophy and science may be at war with theology, they are at peace with it in this. Theology may be at variance with philosophy and science as to its method and its conclusion, but it is at one with them in the aim which is set before it. The scientific study of religion, like the scientific study of mind and the scientific study of nature, has always been an effort

to reduce the many to the one, has always been an attempt to find beneath the varieties of life some common species of existence which originally comprehended all and from which all have ultimately sprung. Let us examine this a little more in detail.

There have been three great systems of what is called natural religion — Polytheism, Pantheism, and Theism. Polytheism is from the side of nature the starting-point, and because it is the starting-point it is an exception to the scientific rule. It is not a search for the one, but for the many. It must be acknowledged that the polytheist does not seek the unity of species; on the contrary, his whole aim is to establish an absolute diversity in the origin of things. Instead of referring the phenomena of nature to a common centre, he begins by finding for each phenomenon a centre of its own. In every aspect of the universe he sees the manifestation of a distinct life. He has a god of peace and a god of war, a power that presides over the storm and a power that brings the calm, a deity for the sunshine and a deity for the shade. Not only has every order of existence its own ruler, but every individual within that order. Not only is there a being who presides over the grove; there is a power which directs the growth of every tree in the grove, and in the more primitive times a life which directs the nourishment of every leaf on the

tree. Nor are these many gods, like the many atoms of Democritus, indistinguishable from one another in quality; on the contrary, their characters are as dissimilar as the spheres which they govern. They have different passions, different motives, different dispositions, different degrees of capacity. If anywhere the doctrine of evolution has met with a direct denial, if anywhere the search for the unity of species has been repudiated by the mind of man, it has been in that system of primitive religion which we call by the name Polytheism.

But it is for this very reason that Polytheism has been unable to keep its place amongst the religions of the world. In point of fact it did not keep its place even amongst those who continued nominally to be its votaries. It was not long before, amidst the many gods, there began to be one who was seen towering above the others, and to whom there began to be rendered a worship which was supreme. It was not long before even this greatest among the gods was forced himself to acknowledge the existence of a power greater than his own, in the presence of that mysterious Fate which was supposed to determine alike the actions of divinities and of mortals. Even the ordinary mind cannot rest in the study of variety. It is not physical science alone that has brought the search for unity; it is the necessity of man's nature. That necessity is illustrated by the fetich-worshipper who refers

the phenomena of nature to a piece of wood or stone, as strongly as by the follower of Mr Spencer, who finds their origin in a nebular fire-cloud. Polytheism exploded by reason of its own lawlessness. It passed away from the minds of men because it was not in harmony with human nature. Human nature, whether it be scientific or unscientific, is unable to rest in many causes; it is constrained by a necessity of its being to reduce the many to the one. Even the unscientific observation of nature was sufficient to vanquish Polytheism; men began to lift their eyes to One who was supreme amongst the many, and they ended by fixing their gaze on One who in the heavens reigned alone.

The result of this reaction towards a religious unity was one or other of two creeds—Pantheism or Theism. Vastly dissimilar as these are in nature, they are perfectly agreed in this, that the leading aim of both is the reduction of the many to the one. Pantheism signifies by etymology that God is all. It designs to account for the life of the world simply and solely by the life of God. All varieties of its being are varieties of *Him*, all movements of its forces are pulsations of His power. Pantheism, indeed, has many forms, because the men of this creed, like the men of most other creeds, have various conceptions of what constitutes the nature of God; but however various be

the forms, they are all at one in holding that the life of the world is a manifestation of the Divine life. Nature is but the garment of the Infinite; mind is but the wakening of the Infinite into the consciousness of personal being; history is but the successive series of those steps of development by which the process of Divine awakening is begun, continued, and perfected. The Divine life grows from the little to the great, and from the great to the greatest; it sleeps in the plant, dreams in the animal, wakes in the man. The life of the plant, the life of the animal, and the life of the man are here, alike as in the system of evolution, but the forms of a single life. Here, alike as in the system of evolution, the world of life itself is no longer sharply separated from that which we are wont to call the world of dead matter. The vital spark which animates the stars in their courses is in this system identical with the vital spark which causes the plant to vegetate and impels the animal to grow, for all are alike the pulsations of a common life which binds the universe in one—the being of that Power whom men call God.

Theism differs from Pantheism in refusing to identify God with the world; it holds that the world, as we now see it, is an existence distinct from the life of God. Nevertheless it is the doctrine of Theism that the world was not always distinct from the life of God. Theism holds the

doctrine of creation, and the doctrine of creation is simply the belief that the life of God is the ultimate source from which in their last analysis all things have flowed. Theism, therefore, is in the same position as Pantheism with reference to the doctrine of unity of species. Differing from Pantheism in its view of this world's present condition, it is at one with that system in holding that this world's present condition does not represent its ultimate nature, and that to find its ultimate nature we shall require to seek the cause of its variations in its origination from a Divine source. Theism, the flower of the religious consciousness, is thus, as regards the unity of species, at one with those systems of evolution which are commonly supposed to embody the spirit of irreligion. The difference between the modern doctrine of evolution and the prevalent doctrine of Theism does not lie in the fact that the one affirms and the other denies the unity of species; they both equally affirm that unity. The evolutionist says that all the forms and phenomena of nature are ultimately referable to the action of a primal force; the theist says that all the objects and events of life are ultimately referable to the action of one primal movement—the movement of that Divine Spirit which brooded over the chaos of creation. The difference between them lies purely in the fact that the one defines what the other leaves

undefined. The evolutionist refers nature to a primal force, but he declares the character of that force to be itself inscrutable; the theist in the Book of Genesis refers nature to a primal movement, but he declares the source of that movement to be an intelligent Will.

With this difference, however, we have at present nothing to do. We are here engaged in answering a special question—whether the modern doctrine of evolution occupies a unique position in seeking to reduce the varieties of nature to a single species? We are now prepared to give an answer to that question. We have found that, so far from occupying a unique position in this respect, the modern doctrine of evolution would be an exception to the rule if it held any other theory than the ultimate unity of species. We have found that every branch of study has for its aim the achievement of precisely the same result—the reduction of the many to the one. We have found that religion itself, which is commonly regarded as in this respect the special antagonist of the doctrine of evolution, is engaged in the pursuit of the self-same inquiry—the search for a common law which shall bind the seeming fragments of creation into the unity of dependence on a source higher than themselves. Is it, therefore, a prevalent misconception when it is alleged that the doctrine of evolution, in proposing to re-

duce the many to the one, has promulgated a new or revolutionary thought? Its thought is neither new nor revolutionary; it is as old as the philosophy of the school of Ionia, it is as conservative as the doctrine of Christian theism. Where it differs from Christian theism is not in what it says, but in what it does not say. Both systems go hand in hand in the belief that somewhere there is a great principle of unity from which all varieties have originally come. Both systems go hand in hand in the effort to convert their belief into a scientific certainty, to demonstrate by the facts of experience what has been already indicated by the intuitions of the mind. They only cease to go hand in hand through the comparative timidity of the evolution-system. Theism believes in an underlying principle of unity, but it holds that principle to be conscious, intelligent, personal; evolution believes in an underlying principle of unity, but it has not yet sufficient courage to assign it a nature or a name.

We now come to the second of those questions which we proposed to consider in this chapter. Having seen that the system of evolution is not singular in its search for a unity of species, we have next to ask, What effect on the old faith of humanity would be produced by the discovery of such a unity? Let us suppose that the evolutionist had succeeded in finding between every

existing species the missing link of connection, would such a discovery force us to abandon the ancient faith in a special creation? Would the religious man be compelled henceforth to limit his devout thoughts to the belief that only the initial act of the universe owed its being to a higher Power? would he henceforth be debarred from the idea that this Power was specially manifested in all the varieties of nature and in all the vicissitudes of life? The man who believes in the difference of species has no difficulty in believing in a special exercise of the Divine power. Seeing in the fish, the reptile, the bird, and the mammal, four distinct orders of life completely walled in and separated from one another, he has no alternative but to conclude that the origination of each of these orders marked a special act on the part of God. But if it should be demonstrated that the fish, the reptile, the bird, and the mammal are not four distinct orders of creation—if it should be shown in the progress of science that there is a life common to them all which constitutes them really one species, and that each of them was at one time evolved from that which preceded it—it is the commonly received opinion that the belief in a special act of God would thereby be negatived and overthrown. It is popularly thought that if the missing link could be found which binds one life to another—that if the transition-

point could be discovered at which the fish passed over into the reptile, the reptile into the bird, and the bird into the mammal, there would no longer be any room in the universe for God's special creative power; we should be forced to limit our view of the Divine activity to the general fact that at some moment of the distant past the first germ of being was called into existence, and to refer all the varieties of that existence to the operation of natural causes.

Now this is the point on which we are at variance with the popular view. Leaving aside altogether the question of the truth or error of the doctrine of evolution, we hold that the establishment of this doctrine would not logically lead to any abandonment of the old faith in God's special acts of creation. We hold that a demonstration of the unity of species would not necessarily militate against the ancient belief that the creation of this world involved a series of specific acts; that if we could trace the links by which the fish became a reptile, the reptile a bird, and the bird a mammal, we should not thereby have excluded God from any one of these processes of transition.

Let us try to illustrate our meaning by an imaginary example.[1] Here is a musical-box which has been constructed to perform twelve tunes. Let us

[1] We reproduce here a metaphor we employed in the American 'Presbyterian Review,' October 1884.

suppose that somewhere between the beginning and the end of these vibrations there were to pass through existence the life of an intelligent man. Let us suppose that he came into the world at tune No. 2, and went out at tune No. 11; what would be his verdict on the observation of this phenomenon? Two alternatives would lie before him. He might either say that the one tune had grown out of the other—the hypothesis of evolution; or he might hold that at the close of each tune a reconstructive force was imposed from without to produce a change of melody—the hypothesis of creation. Yet we know that these alternatives are no alternatives. We know that at one and the same moment each change in the melody is both a special evolution and a special creation. On one side it is a process purely mechanical, growing out of physical conditions and able to be accounted for on simply material principles; on the other side it is a work essentially spiritual, elaborated by the action of intelligence, and revealing in all its movements the movement of a living soul; in its last analysis it is the product of life.

Now our position in the actual universe is precisely analogous to this. The world is to us a musical-box; in other words, it is a piece of mechanism which we find performing certain rhythmical movements. We have never seen either the beginning or the end of these movements. We come

upon the scene of time after the universe has completed its first and initial melody; we shall be compelled to quit the scene of time ere the universe shall have entered upon its last. All that we behold or can behold is an intermediate process, a process which hovers somewhere between the opening and the close, and whose link of connection with either the opening or the close is incapable of being discerned. Under these circumstances we are thrown back upon our reflective faculties, and obliged to seek from inference what we are unable to learn from actual perception. Now to us as to the imaginary being whom we introduced between the second and the eleventh tune, there are open two possible inferences from the facts before us. We may either hold that the different vibrations of this universe grow out of one another, or we may hold that each of them is a change of melody produced by the influence of a higher power. The former view is that commonly attributed to the evolutionist; the latter is that generally claimed for the creationist. But the question which we ask is this—Are these any more alternatives in the case of the universe than in the case of the musical-box? We have seen that in the case of the musical-box they are not alternatives at all, that it is not only possible but necessary to accept both at the same moment; the one tune grows out of the other, but it does so simply from the fact

that there has been a musician at work. Is there anything in the case of the universe which should prevent the same combination of elements? is there any reason why this musical-box also should not at one and the same moment be the result of its mechanical construction and the result of the musician's art? Let us suppose that we had succeeded in tracing the link which connects the man with the animal, and the link which binds the animal to the plant; let us suppose even that we had succeeded in discovering the missing link between the life of the plant and that other species of life to which we popularly give the name of dead matter, —would this close the question between the evolutionist and the creationist? It would certainly prove that there is a connection between the melodies performed by the musical-box of the universe, but we are not aware that the creationist has ever denied that fact any more than the evolutionist. We have seen already that theism demands the ultimate unity of all things as strongly as does any theory of modern science, and this is only in other words to say that it demands the recognition of a certain link of connection which shall bind together the varieties of existence. The sole question is, What *is* the binding link? To find the connection even between the man and what is popularly called dead matter, would not be equivalent to discovering the ultimate source of things; for the doctrine

of evolution most strongly asserts that matter is not an ultimate, but, on the contrary, is itself only a phenomenon produced by an antecedent cause.

According to the Book of Genesis, which may be taken to represent the views of creationism, the link which connects the different species of existence is a word or command of God: "God said, Let there be light;" "God said, Let there be a firmament;" "God said, Let the waters be gathered together." Let it be observed that in the view of the writer of Genesis this is really a reduction of all varieties to a principle of unity. The Book of Genesis contemplates as strongly as the book of evolution the possibility of reducing the varied phenomena of nature to a single species; only, the species to which it does reduce them is a species of *life*. It is this which makes us recognise in the Book of Genesis an advocate of the theory of creationism. Here, as in the system of evolution, all things are ultimately referred to a single origin; but their origin is said to be, not an unintelligent law, nor a material mechanism, but a living Spirit. We have no difficulty, accordingly, when we have accepted this principle of unity, in admitting along with it a principle of constant variety; in other words, we have no difficulty in recognising in the first chapter of Genesis an illustration at once of the aim contemplated by evolution and of the

power evinced by the attribute of special creation. In this musical-box the melodies are at once connected and disconnected,—they are connected in point of fact, they are disconnected in point of nature. The link which binds them and constitutes their unity is the word and will of an omnipotent Being who has chosen so to do, but who, had He chosen otherwise, might have left them for ever disjoined; their unity is the fact of their common creation, their identity of species is the formula, "God said."

Now, at first sight, the modern doctrine of evolution is the direct antithesis of this view. In the Book of Genesis the varieties in the order of nature are constituted by that very act of creation which at the same time constitutes their unity. The element common to them all is the fact that God speaks; but the actual speech of God is the bringing forth of variations in the order of nature. If God's work of creation were a single act, there would be nothing special about it; but when it is represented as a series of acts, each one of these must be regarded as a special manifestation of Divine power. That in the Book of Genesis which makes the acts of God special creations, is not the varied character of the objects created; it is the fact that each of them *is* created. Let us suppose that the six days' creation had been represented, not as the making of different things, but as a

repeated creation of precisely the same thing six times over, the six days' creation would none the less be a record of six special manifestations of Divine power. That which makes the speciality is not the variety in the object, but the fact that the object, whether it be varied from or identical with its predecessor, has involved the putting forth of another act of Divine will; the formula, "God said," which binds the varieties into one, is at the same time the very thing which renders them special creations.

To this view, as we have said, the modern doctrine of evolution seems to present a direct negative. Here the formula, "God said," is conspicuous by its absence. There is a seeming tendency to ignore all transcendental causes, all influences that cannot be weighed and measured in material scales. The unity to which it is sought to reduce the phenomena of nature is to appearance a purely physical unity; the links by which it is attempted to bind the highest to the lowest species are the influences called heredity, concomitant variation, natural selection, and environment. We are pointed, in the first instance, to the fact that like begets like, that the offspring has a tendency to repeat the qualities of the parent. We are pointed, next, to the converse fact that like does not beget an exact likeness. We are shown how the qualities of the offspring diverge, in some respects, from the qualities of the

parent,—at first in a very slight degree, but ultimately, as generations advance, to an extent which renders the latest progeny of the species widely dissimilar from the earlier. We are then directed to observe that the earth is undergoing from time to time changes in its atmospheric conditions; in other words, that the forms of life which exist on the globe are periodically encircled by new environments. We are called to consider that when these changes of climate occur, they will find the existing forms of life unequally prepared for them. This, of course, follows from the fact that the existing forms of life have become themselves unequal. If like does not beget an exact likeness, if the latest progeny of the species exhibits a marked divergence from its earlier individual members, it follows that there are already differences in the species which must render one member much more adapted than another for the climatic change. Hence it is that the doctrine of evolution has called in at this point the aid of a fourth and more powerful influence, to which it has given the name of natural selection, or the survival of the fittest. By that name it designs to emphasise the truth that those members of the species which outlive the change of climate are precisely those that have already been most prepared for the change by their process of divergence from the original type. The earlier forms having been adapted to an earlier environment, are unable

to bear the strain of the new conditions, and accordingly succumb and die; the latest forms having had time by the very process of heredity to modify their original type, are able in the first instance to adapt themselves, and ultimately to assimilate themselves, to those changes which have destroyed their predecessors, and so to become the progenitors of another and an essentially different race.

Such is in brief outline the doctrine which has been promulgated by Mr Darwin and elaborated by Mr Herbert Spencer. It professes to show the process by which the original unity of life has been broken up into such varieties as present the appearance of specially created species. It exhibits to us that line of evolution on which, by travelling backward, we shall be able to find again the original unity out of which the varieties have come. It tells us that by following this line we shall be liberated from the primitive and puerile errors of religious speculation. We shall no longer seek to interpret nature by calling in the aid of something which is supernatural or unnatural; we shall come to interpret her by her own light. We shall find the explanation of the manifestations and the changes around us not in the intervention of some celestial power which from time to time breaks through the original arrangements of the universe, but in the presence and action of those

laws of movement and of life which themselves constitute the original arrangement of nature, and which are themselves amply adequate to account for all natural operations.

Such is the goal which the doctrine of evolution proposes to itself—a goal which, if achieved, would certainly lead to the elimination from human thought of the very idea of the supernatural. But now we have to point out a remarkable circumstance, and it is this, that the doctrine of evolution has deserted its own goal, has abandoned in *fact* the aim which it proposed in words. If we take as its representative the philosophy of Mr Herbert Spencer, we shall be more and more impressed with the conviction that the line of demarcation between evolutionism and creationism has been obliterated by the doctrine of evolution itself. Mr Spencer, like Mr Darwin, starts by opposing the idea of evolution to the idea of special creation, and professes to trace back the varied phenomena of the universe to the operation of a common element. But when Mr Spencer has completed his task, he finds that so far from having reached the solution of a mystery, he has in reality only discovered the spot where the mystery lies. He traces back the varieties of life and nature to some primitive material germ, and then he tells us that this material germ is only a symbol. When he has

reached his last analysis he finds that the entire process has been only an analysis of symbols. These so-called forms of matter are but the shadows of something which is not material—something which manifests itself in movement, and which, therefore, for want of a better name, we must call force. Behind the manifestations of things, behind the changes which the eye can see and the ear can hear, behind the tremor of nerves and the weaving of tissues, there exists and operates perpetually a Power which is quite inscrutable. It underlies all things, it constitutes the being of all things, yet it is itself indiscernible. Mr Spencer calls it the Unknowable, but it would be a mistake to think that by that term he designs to designate a mere negation. The Unknowable is with him exactly identical with that which the metaphysician calls the transcendental, or which the German idealist calls the Absolute. The very confession that it is unknown is really a confession that the doctrine of evolution, to be adequate, must be supplemented by the doctrine of a specially creative Power. Why does Mr Spencer not stop short with his germ-cell of plant-life, or with his fire-cloud of cosmical life? Why does he not arrest himself when he has elucidated in the animal world the operation of the laws called heredity and natural selection, or when he has traced back in the phys-

ical world the "definite coherent heterogeneity," to the "indefinite incoherent homogeneity"? It is because Mr Spencer is acute enough to feel and candid enough to admit that none of these things are principles of unity at all. He sees that the most fundamental phenomena of nature are effects and not causes,[1]—that the explanation of things needs itself to be explained. Nay, he sees something more than that. To him all the phenomena of nature are *equally* effects; one thing is not more mysterious than another—there is no distinction between great and small. The movement of a muscle is in itself not less incomprehensible than the united movement of the solar system; the minutest and most commonplace act in the visible creation is as incapable of explaining its own existence, as is the grandest process of the universe conducted on the largest scale.

Under these circumstances and guided by these convictions, what does Mr Spencer do? He calls in the aid of something transcendental—something whose existence and nature he confesses to be inexplicable, but which he holds to be required in order to explain other things. This mysterious, inscrutable, incomprehensible agency Mr Spencer calls Force. He does not mean to designate the force of gravity, or the force of repulsion, or the force of cohesion; these are themselves only forms,

[1] See his 'Principles of Biology,' vol. i. p. 491.

manifestations, effects. He intends to express the fact that behind every form of matter and at the back of every order of movement there is a mysterious entity which is only known by what it does, and only seen in what it manifests—a Force which is not simply the sum of forces, but their fountain and their origin. To this primal source Mr Spencer has no scruple in referring the ultimate explanation of *everything;* it is just because he sees all things equally dependent on the transcendental Power that he cannot recognise the distinction between the miraculous and the natural. Mr Spencer truly says that the view of the universe entertained by him is a far more mysterious view than that held by many forms of professed supernaturalism. But let us understand distinctly to what Mr Spencer's view commits him; to nothing less than the adoption of that very theory of special creation which his philosophy is designed to rebut. Mr Spencer's view is indeed more mysterious than that of the ordinary theist, but simply because it is more transcendental,—in other words, because it allows less room to the operation of material causes. In this philosophy every act of nature without exception is equally a special creation, or, which is virtually the same thing, a special manifestation of something absolute and transcendental. The ordinary theist only calls for the intervention of his God at the

opening of new eras or on the rise of special emergencies; the God of Mr Spencer is evoked for aid every instant of every hour. The direct manifestations of the God of theism are exceptional; the direct manifestations of Mr Spencer's inscrutable Power are the one rule to which there are no exceptions. We ask if such a philosophy as this does not give back to the creationist all that it ever took away, if evolution has not here restored with the right hand what it abstracted with the left. It came as the opponent of supernaturalism, and professed in that capacity to reduce all things to a single natural law; but it now goes on to tell us that the law which it has discovered is itself only a symbol, a shadow, a reflected image of something that lies behind it—that the presence which lies behind it is in reality the sole agent in the universe, and that the nature and modes of its agency are outside the limits of human experience.

And here we are brought to ask if the doctrine of evolution itself has not lifted us into a line of thought which may ultimately prove a line of junction with its opponent theory. There are no two views of the universe which have in modern times been so persistently opposed to one another as the doctrine of the unity and the doctrine of the plurality of species. The evolutionist holds that originally only one thing existed, and that

the many things are but the varieties of this one; the creationist holds that originally the world existed in a state of variety, and that its various forms proceeded directly from the hand of God. Looking at these two theories from the standpoint of human feeling, perhaps the experience of most men will be identical as regards both—a process of alternate attraction and recoil. There is something grand in the prospect of seeing all things reduced to unity, and there are few who do not experience a certain sympathy with the aim of the evolutionist. Yet when we look at the matter from the side of mere feeling, it seems as if his were an impossible aim. The mind is almost tempted to reject without examination the doctrine that plants, animals, men, suns and systems, were originally conglomerated in the life of a single fire-cloud, and that objects which now present an aspect so markedly diverse were once bound up in the unity of a common germ-cell. This is a sensation which even men of science must at some time have experienced, a sensation to which Professor Tyndall has himself confessed;[1] and therefore it is not too much to say that, when measured by the standard of feeling, the theory of unity of species fails to satisfy. But is the theory of plur-

[1] Lecture on "The Scientific Uses of the Imagination"—'Athenæum,' September 24, 1870; page 409.

ality any more consonant with human feeling? It seems at first sight the simplest and most natural view to believe that God made objects just as they are, in all their present forms and with all their present varieties. But as we meditate on the subject more deeply, we come to ask ourselves if in this mode of conception we have not really lowered our sense of the majesty of God; if we have not degraded Him from a Creator into an artificer—from a Being who works out a process, into a man who constructs a variety of mechanisms. The most devout theists will be precisely the men who will be most impressed that we have, and it is precisely on this account that the latest and purest forms of theism have been more and more dissociating themselves from the notion of mechanical workmanship. Feeling, therefore, is on both sides of the question; it revolts equally from the unqualified contemplation of specific unity and from the unqualified statement of specific variety. Yet it is impossible that both of these views can be false; there is no third supposition which is either tenable or conceivable: how are we to account for the recoil from each in turn? There is only one way in which we can account for it; both cannot be false, but may not both be true? May not the recoil from the exclusive contemplation of either have proceeded simply from the fact that neither

has a right to be exclusive; that the one theory is not the opposite of the other but the counterpart and complement of the other, and that the true recognition of the unity of nature is only to be reached in the reconciliation of both?

Now in the system of Mr Herbert Spencer the attempt at such a reconciliation seems unconsciously to have been made. We say unconsciously. Mr Spencer is distinctively the apostle of evolution, and professedly the opponent of a doctrine of special creation; nothing is further from his thoughts than the reconciliation of things which he believes to be irreconcilable. None the less is it a law of thought that extremes tend to meet. It is the very extremeness of Mr Spencer's evolutionism that has driven him against his own will to the borders of creationism. He shows us elaborately how the many have come out of the one. He traces back the varieties of nature to a common homogeneous source, and binds up the human, the animal, the vegetable, the mineral, and the solar, within the ultimate limits of a nebulous fire-cloud; this is certainly the most advanced, seemingly the most materialistic evolution. But when Mr Spencer goes on to tell us that the fire-cloud is itself only the shadow of a Power which is perfectly transcendental—when he proceeds to unfold the fact that this seemingly material envelope is not material at all, but

merely a manifestation to the senses of a Force whose being is inscrutable—he transforms in a moment the whole structure which he has elaborately reared. He has been arguing throughout for the production of all things by evolution; he now informs us that at the back of all things there is a process quite distinct from evolution, a process which we can only describe in terms of our own ignorance as the successive manifestations of an incomprehensible Power. When Mr Spencer has promulgated this theory, in what light are we henceforth to regard him? Has he done with the system of evolution what at the outset he promised to do? has he made it coextensive with the universe? On the contrary, we have no hesitation in saying that in the last analysis he has abandoned it altogether, and abandoned it in favour of something very like that very doctrine of creation which his philosophy is designed to refute. If the nebulous fire-cloud with all which it contains be itself only the shadow of a Power which is transcendental, and if every movement of evolution, by which the fire-cloud breaks into variety, is in reality effected only by the movement of that Power, can we any longer be said to be dealing with a theory whose aim is to establish the unity of species? Are we not, on the contrary, engaged in the contemplation of a theory which does not finally hold the unity of species, but has gone back, at the

last stage, to the despised and rejected doctrine of a series of special creations? If all things are the manifestations of a transcendental Force, in what sense can the plant be said to be one with the animal, or the animal one with the man? They are no doubt one in the sense that they are each and all manifestations of the same transcendent Power, but every theist in the world would admit such a unity as that. In fact we have here in another form a repetition of the old creed of the six days' creation, except that the number of the days is indefinitely multiplied. The first chapter of Genesis united its varieties of species by the formula "God said"; the evolutionism of Mr Herbert Spencer disjoins its unity of species by a statement which amounts to precisely the same formula—the statement that the converging forces of this universe are but the repeated manifestations of an inscrutable Power.

What does the creationist mean when he says that the man is a different species from the animal, and the animal a different species from the plant? Clearly this, that the one could never have grown out of the other without the intervention of a Power which transcends the limits of our present knowledge. Grant to the creationist that such a Power has intervened, and it will be as easy for him to admit that the man has grown out of the animal, as it is to hold that the man was made immediately

from the dust of the earth—as easy, that is to say, so far as the principle of creationism is concerned. Let a man once be persuaded that the life which is within him is the result of an intervention by a higher Power, and it will be a matter of comparative indifference to him through what medium that Power has operated; he will feel that he is no more divorced from God by the establishment of a link between him and the lower animals, than by the establishment of a link between him and the dust of the ground, and in each case for the same reason — because both are only symbols through which acts a higher Power. Yet this is precisely the position of the doctrine of evolution as represented by its chief apostle. Mr Spencer, after linking together every order of life and matter in a common chain of unity, has wound up by telling us that the chain is itself only a symbol, and that the real agent of the whole process is a Power that transcends the limits of our knowledge. To this Power, according to his system, must be ultimately referred every change of species and every order of development. The discovery of the missing link between the man and the animal would not explain the passage of the animal to the man, for the real link between them is not a link of mechanism, but their mutual connection with a transcendental Power of which each of them is but a single manifestation: is not

the doctrine of a special creation here abundantly restored?

Will it be said that the doctrine of evolution is not bound to follow in this respect the views of its leading apostle? Will it be contended that the man of science has nothing more to do than to find the visible chain that connects visible phenomena, and that all ulterior conclusions belong to the sphere of speculation? Such a principle, if carried out to its logical issue, would destroy the existence of science itself, but let us for the moment suppose it to be true. Let us limit our horizon to the region comprehended by the material chain of evolution embraced in the system of Mr Darwin. We ask if it is possible to account for the existence even of this chain on the principle of material evolution alone. We have already seen that in the system of Mr Darwin there are two things demanded at the very beginning, as the pre-requisites of a doctrine of evolution—the law of heredity, and the law of concomitant variation. On the one hand we saw that like begets like, that the offspring bears some resemblance to its parent. On the other hand we found that like does not beget an exact likeness, that the offspring in some respect differs from the type of its parent. These two laws are essential to the very existence of a Darwinian evolution. But now we would ask to what extent the Darwinian evolution can explain

these laws themselves? Heredity it certainly can explain; that like should beget like, is just what we should expect from the existence of an evolutionary principle. But how can it account for the other law—the principle of concomitant variation? How can it explain the origin of the first point of unlikeness which the offspring exhibited to its parent? That like begets like is a law of evolution; but is it a law of evolution that like should beget unlike? We are not arguing against the principles of Darwinism—we do not believe that the point in hand is any objection to the Darwinian theory; we merely contend that it shows the Darwinian theory to require the alliance and co-operation of some other theory. It is easy to account for the breaking up of unity into variety of species after the principle of variation has begun—after the offspring has begun to diverge from the type of the parent. But how are we to account for the first divergence? how are we to explain the beginnings of that unlikeness which by propagation and heredity ultimately results in a new order of being? This is a point which Darwinism does not explain, because it lies behind Darwinism. The Darwinian theory accepts as a fact of nature the law of concomitant variation just as it accepts as a fact of nature the law of hereditary transmission, and in so doing it is perfectly scientific. But philosophy ever lies behind

science and takes up the problem where science lays it down. And philosophy sees that this law of variation, while it is as much a fact of nature as the law of heredity, demands the recognition in nature of something which heredity alone would not demand. It sees that while like may beget like without calling in the aid of any transcendental force, like cannot beget unlike without supposing that such a force has intervened.[1] It sees that the first divergence of the offspring from the parent cannot be explained by anything in the life of the parent, and that therefore it becomes imperative to recognise the co-operation of another and a higher Power. It is a recognition of this truth which has led Mr Spencer to build a philosophy on the old Darwinian science. Darwinian as he is in principle, he has perceived that one of the laws which constitute the theory of Darwin is itself unaccounted for by that theory, nay, that it demands the addition of a theory in some sense the opposite of Darwinian. Accordingly, Mr Spencer has not scrupled in the last analysis to call in the aid of the inscrutable. He has not hesitated to confess that the process by which he has beheld nature to be evolved from unity

[1] Spencer speaks of "the power which certain units have of arranging themselves into a special form." He calls this "an innate tendency."—Prin. of Biol., Am. ed., vol. i. pp. 180-183. See also Mivart's chapter on "Independent Similarities of Structure"—Genesis of Species, 2d ed., p. 82.

into variety is a process which would be itself inexplicable without the presupposition of an active Power behind it—a Power whose own being is shrouded in mystery, but of whose existence all other beings are at once the manifestations and the evidences. The system of Darwinian evolution in the hands of its own votaries, and on the ground of its own conclusions, has been led to adopt a system as a supplement to itself—a system which in all essential particulars is identical with that ancient creed which declared the heavens and the earth to be the work of an Almighty God.

CHAPTER VII.

EVOLUTION AND THE DIVINE ORIGIN OF LIFE.

IN our last chapter we arrived at a very definite though as yet a merely general result. We found that the doctrine of evolution is not necessarily nor essentially opposed to the doctrine of special creation, and that from different points of view there may coexist in the same mind at the same time a belief in the unity and a conviction of the diversity of species. We now proceed from the exhibition of the general principle to the unfolding of its special applications. We have seen that a system of evolution may admit an act of special creation; we now go on to inquire what are the phenomena of this universe which have always seemed to demand such an act, and whether in their case the old demand can still be satisfied without waiving the claims of modern science.

We naturally turn, at the outset, to that mystery of mysteries—the origin of life. And the question which first suggests itself is, Have we any scientific

data to start from? In a work whose aim is scientific, our course will certainly be surer if we can base the result of our investigations on a dictum of modern science rather than on a doctrine of ancient revelation. Now it so happens that the science of our nineteenth century has in relation to the origin of life given us such a dictum to start with. With ever-increasing emphasis and with ever-accumulating evidence it has again and again asserted the doctrine that in all the records of human experience life has only come from life; that within the memory of man and within the limit of historic annals there has not yet been discovered an instance in which any living form has proceeded from a form not living. It is worthy of observation that the clear affirmation this truth belongs distinctively to the science of our century; in the eighteenth century theories of a different nature were prevalent and popular. It has been reserved for an age supposed to be specially materialistic to give decided scientific expression to the existence of a natural law whereby life cannot come from death.

In illustration of this position we shall quote the words of one whose right to speak on such a subject will not be questioned. Sir William Thomson says: "A very ancient way of thinking, to which many naturalists still hold fast, admits that by means of certain meteorological conditions, differ-

ent from the present, inanimate matter may have crystallised or fermented in such a manner as to produce living germs, or organic cells, or protoplasms. But science affords us a number of inductive proofs against this hypothesis of *spontaneous generation*, as you have already heard from my predecessor in this chair. A minute examination has not, up to this time, discovered any power capable of originating life, but life itself. Inanimate matter cannot become living except under the influence of matter already living. This is a fact in science which seems to me as well ascertained as the law of gravitation. . . . And I am ready to accept as an article of faith in science, valid for all time and in all space, That Life is produced by Life, and only by life."[1]

The predecessor to whom Sir William Thomson alludes is Professor Huxley, whose Presidential Address to the British Association[2] was devoted to the proof that no evidence has yet been discovered of life having been produced from non-living matter. Professor Huxley therefore holds that the production of life *by* life is now the law of nature. He goes on to tell us, however, that in his opinion there was at one time a different law of nature. He says that although we never now see life produced by that which has no life, he believes, by what

[1] Address to the British Association at Edinburgh, 1871.
[2] Reported in London Athenæum, September 17, 1870.

he calls an act of philosophic faith, that it once was so. Of course no one can hinder Professor Huxley from cherishing such a belief; we have simply to point out that in doing so he is departing from the principle of science to the faith in miracle. He is admitting that what is now a law of nature, and a law which according to Sir William Thomson is as firmly established as that of gravitation, existed originally as the violation of another, an earlier and an opposite law. If Professor Huxley could transform his philosophic faith into a scientific certainty, he would thereby destroy at a stroke the whole fabric of evolution which he has so patiently reared, and would break that chain of continuity which he loves to find in all things. Meantime we are not concerned with his faith but with his science, and his science is confessedly on the side of Sir William Thomson. He admits that the course of nature as we now have it, is a course in which the living can only spring from the living; and he is therefore an enemy to the doctrine that spontaneous generation exists as a fact of experience.

We may take it, then, as one of the most sure positions of modern science, that, in the system of nature as now constituted, life can only proceed from life. But let us understand distinctly what is involved in this position; it means nothing less than this, that life is eternal. If no life could ever exist except as the product of a life which existed

before it, there follows the inevitable conclusion that life never began to be; that in point of fact it has already proved the immortality of its nature by a duration from infinite ages. In endeavouring to realise this thought there are two courses open to us. We may either say that there has been an eternal series of children and fathers through which life has propagated itself from the depths of the infinite past, or we may stop short in the recognition of one great central Life, which has been the primal parent of all other lives, and which itself has had no beginning. The former, if held exclusively, would be an atheistic position; the latter would be the affirmation of theism. But what we wish at present to point out is the fact that, whichever of these views we adopt, we are landed in the same conclusion as to life's essential immortality. Whether we think of it as having been propagated through an endless series of ancestors, or whether we conceive it as having been originally centred in the being of a divine intelligence whose goings forth have been of old for ever, we are led in either case to the same result so far as the present question is concerned—the recognition of an essence whose existence has been everlasting, whose nature has been immortal, whose beginning has been nowhere.

We have said that there are open to us these two modes of conceiving the eternity of life. We

shall speedily find, however, that one of them will require to be relinquished. At first sight the alternatives might seem to be equally plausible. It might appear to be just as easy to hold that life has been eternally propagated from parent to offspring, as to believe that there exists a great primal Life, which is itself without father or mother or descent. The alternatives are no doubt equally mysterious. In truth, however, modern science soon compels us to acknowledge that, leaving mystery out of the question, the first of them must be given up as untenable. If life can only spring from life, it is indeed certain that vitality can have no beginning, but it is not less certain that in this world it had a beginning. The further back we go, we find the forms of life more simple and the quantity of life more limited, clearly showing that this earth of ours does not possess a boundless supply of the vital element. And even if we could adopt the theory of Sir William Thomson, which supposes that originally the vital spark was carried to our world in a meteor, we should thereby only postpone, and not avoid, the necessity to arrest the movement of the infinite regress. For as Professor Huxley has truly pointed out, no form of life as we know it could possibly have existed during the gaseous period. It is beyond all question that there existed a time in which physical vitality was impossible; and therefore it is beyond all question

that, so far as the visible universe is concerned, there must have existed a time in which life began to be.

There are accordingly two conclusions to which we are constrained to come. On the one hand we find that life has been eternal; on the other hand we perceive that the physical forms of life have not been eternal, but had a definite beginning in time. Each of these conclusions inevitably results from our acceptance of the positions of modern science, and in order to deny either of them we should require to deny these positions. Modern science tells us that the law of the physical world in which we live is the law of biogenesis—in other words, the principle that life can only spring from life; unless we deny that this law has itself been eternal, we shall be forced on the strength of it to admit the eternity of life. Modern science tells us, on the other hand, that the physical forms of life as we know them have been developed from the small to the great and from the great to the greatest, clearly pointing to the fact that they had a beginning in time. Unless we deny the accuracy of these observations, we shall be equally forced to admit that the forms of life as we know them have not been eternal.

It is clear, then, that at one time the eternal life must have been brought into such contact with the physical forms of this universe as to produce a physical or temporal life; the phenomena of physi-

cal vitality must have had their beginning in the impartation to material forms of a portion of that central Life which had no beginning. This is the only conclusion which is warranted by the facts of experience, and the only conclusion which will harmonise the seemingly contradictory aspects of nature; it is a conclusion also which, making allowance for differences in expression, will be as acceptable to the man of advanced science as to the votary of the ancient faith, for it lies at the very basis of Mr Spencer's own position. But now let us ask what appearance to the eye of a spectator would be produced by witnessing such an act as we have supposed. If the central Life of the universe should at a certain moment of time impart a portion of its being to one of the physical forms of nature, and if the eye of a spectator could be imagined to have witnessed the creative ceremony, what would he see? he would see only the appearance of a *spontaneous generation.* The central Life of the universe could not in itself be visible to him; he could only trace its presence by its effect, and in the present instance its effect would be limited to the impartation of life and movement to a form which hitherto had neither lived nor moved. We often think that we should have been highly privileged had we been permitted to witness the miracle of the creation of life; in truth the witnessing of that miracle would by no means have absolved us

from the necessity of walking by simple faith. We should have seen nothing but the stirring of movement where once all was still, and the wakening of energy where once all was dead. It is true we might have reasonably inferred that the movement had been produced by a mover, and that the life had sprung from a life, but that inference would in the main have been an act of faith. There would have been less reason for it then than there is now. At that early time we should not have had any data for affirming that it was not the nature of life to spring up spontaneously; it has been reserved for modern science, by the result of those experiments which have denied this power to nature, to convert the act of simple faith into an assured affirmation of reason.

We pass now to a second question, which is directly suggested by the foregoing one. If the forms of physical life have owed their origin to the contact with a central and eternal Life, to what have they owed their propagation and continuance? Admitting that physical life had its beginning in a Divine origin, has it been able, when once originated, to propagate itself without any further reference to the source from which it sprang; in other words, is it only for the earliest vital form that we need to evoke the aid of a higher vital Power? There are popularly distinguished three forms of vitality. We may describe them respectively as

life unconscious, life conscious, and life cognisant of its own consciousness; the first is the plant, the second is the animal, and the third is the man. How are we to conceive these as related to one another? Are we to think of the life of the plant as constituting the entire germ of the other two; in other words, are we to view the animal and the man as simply a higher manifestation of the vegetable germ-cell? Or are we, on the other hand, to claim for each of the three an altogether independent being? Are we to deny that there is any community of life between the plant and the animal or between the animal and the man, and to assert that each of them owes its existence solely and entirely to a disconnected fiat of Almighty Will? These are the two alternatives which in our day are constantly placed before us, and the advocates of each hypothesis call upon us with equal confidence to make our choice between them. The choice of either seems indeed equally impossible and equally repugnant to the analogy of human experience. The moment we have elected to follow one alternative in preference to the other, we appear to have made a transition from Scylla into Charybdis. The one hypothesis is the effort to find a world without God, the other is the attempt to find God without a world.

So repugnant in itself is each of these positions, that one naturally comes to ask if they are really

the only available alternatives; if there may not be, after all, a more excellent and an intermediate way embodying the advantages of both, and avoiding the repulsiveness of either. These two views are indeed extremes. The one has been called the doctrine of evolution, and the other the doctrine of creation; but it would in truth be more correct to say that the one is a system of *evo*lution, and the other a system of *revo*lution. Evolution is always opposed to revolution, because its very nature involves the denial of a breach of continuity; but it does not thereby follow that it is opposed to creation. We propose to show that, in point of fact, there *is* a middle way between the hypothesis of a world that can develop itself without God, and the hypothesis of a God who disregards the laws of the world. We propose to show that, by the testimony alike of the old faith and of the new, there is a possibility of reconciling the doctrine of natural development with that other and higher doctrine which teaches the necessity for the contact of a Divine Life.

We begin with the testimony of the new faith—the faith professed by modern science. And in the first instance it is clear that modern science could not recognise for a moment the possibility of that hypothesis which denies the existence of natural development. It could never admit the doctrine that the objects of this universe are disconnected

objects—that there is no link of union between them, and no binding force which joins them in one common order. Modern science, on the contrary, distinctly holds, and holds with ever-increasing emphasis, that there is a chain of connection between all the objects of the universe without exception. It recognises the fact, that however wide is the difference between the plant and the animal, the animal and the man, there is yet something in the highest man which he holds in common with the lowliest plant, and that to this extent, therefore, the life of the highest man is connected with the life of the lowliest plant. Modern science, then, prefers evolution to revolution. But does it follow that it prefers evolution to creation? Refusing as it does to accept a God without nature, is it willing to recognise nature without God? In order to give this question the most impartial answer possible, we shall take as the type of the modern scientific spirit the philosophy of its most advanced representative, Mr Herbert Spencer. None insists more strongly than Mr Spencer on the organic connection of the universe, on the fact that all forms of life are somewhere knit together. But what, according to him, is the bond that unites them? We call attention to the fact that in the view of Mr Spencer there is not one bond but two—a lower and a higher. On the one hand he perceives that earthly objects are connected by earthly con-

ditions, that each is in some sense the cause of the other, and that by the mutual action and reaction of all the parts the life of each part is regulated and modified. But on the other hand Mr Spencer feels that earthly conditions will not suffice to explain the existence of a single vital form. He feels that the phenomena which seem to link one species to another are themselves only the symbols of a great reality which lies behind them, and that the real and ultimate link of connection is to be sought in the continual presence and the constant persistence of a mighty central force which, itself incomprehensible, comprehends all. Now, to what does this statement of Mr Spencer amount as regards the origin of species? Simply to this, that no single variety of life can exist except by the intervention, or, if the phrase be preferred, through the contact, of another and a higher Life. The life of the plant, the life of the animal, and the life of the man, are with him, indeed, simply the various forms of one form of existence; but that form of existence of which they constitute the varieties is itself a Power perfectly transcendental and utterly inscrutable—as transcendental as the ultimate principle of the metaphysician, as inscrutable as the Life which the theist designates God. Of this central Life every physical life and every physical species of life is but the diverse manifestation, and none would more readily admit than Mr Spencer

that the manifestations are at once diverse and progressive. The most abstruse science as fully as the most practical experience acknowledges that the plant is lower than the animal, and that the animal is inferior to the man; and Mr Spencer confesses that the secret of this evolutionary progress lies in the presence and in the action of that inscrutable Force which stands to him in the place of God.

Such is the testimony of the new faith—the faith of modern science. Let us next consider what is the testimony of that old faith which has found its symbol and its representative in the opening chapter of the Book of Genesis. The first chapter of Genesis describes the creation of life progressively; it represents the order of existence as beginning with the plant, proceeding to the animal, and culminating with the man. If we take the view of Hugh Miller, that the writer intended to describe only those phenomena of creation which were ideally visible, and that he therefore left unrecorded that earlier creation which had already taken place in the marine depths, we shall find that the order of Genesis is also the order of Geology. We have indeed sometimes wondered if even that earlier marine creation is not obliquely glanced at in the remarkable statement that the Spirit or breath of God moved upon the face of the waters. The breathing of God is a Hebrew

symbol for the impartation of life; and so far as grammar is concerned, the natural reading of the passage would be, that one of the earliest manifestations of the Divine Force was the production of life in the depths of the ocean. If this view could be accepted, it would remove the only alleged discrepancy as to a matter of fact between the order of Genesis and the order of Geology, and would remove it without limiting the scope of that purpose which the writer of Genesis had in mind. This, however, is not the question which we have now before us. We are not here considering the order but the method of creation. We want to know not so much whether the plant preceded the animal, or the animal the plant, as whether the animal and the plant have, according to the Book of Genesis, proceeded from the same source, or from different sources; whether the life of the one has sprung from the life of the other by an unaided physical generation, or whether the procession from the one life to the other has involved and demanded the contact of a higher Life.

In speaking of the system of Mr Spencer, we found that he really recognised two sources of the continuity of species — a binding influence from below, and a binding influence from above or from the region of transcendentalism. Now, if we examine the account of the first chapter of Genesis, we shall find that it offers precisely the

same testimony. Let us begin with its description of plant-life. In verse 11 we read—"And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so." The first thing which strikes us here is an illustration of the remark made above, that the earliest manifestation of life would have presented to a spectator the appearance of a spontaneous generation. Plant-life is here brought into existence through the medium of natural causes which were in existence before it; and so great is the honour assigned to these causes, that physical nature is described as the immediate agent in the production of life, "Let the earth bring forth." Here, then, according to the writer of Genesis, is a physical basis of life, a material agency which existed before its coming and prepared the conditions necessary for its reception. The question now occurs whether, in the view of the writer of Genesis, the physical basis which conditions the life of the plant conditions also the life of the animal and of the man. A moment's examination must lead us to an affirmative answer. We read in verse 20—"And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life;" in verse 24—"And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind." The point to be observed here is, that in the case of

marine animals and terrestrial animals the same basis of physical nature which constituted the agency in the production of plant-life was again the immediately operative principle. Here again, as in the case of the plant, natural causes are assigned the honour of being the agents of creation, and the production of marine and terrestrial life is allowed to present the appearance of a spontaneous generation, "Let the waters bring forth," "Let the earth bring forth."

If we turn now to the account given of the creation of man, we shall be struck by the fact of that extreme prominence which is assigned to the physical medium, which was the condition of his existence. In Genesis ii. 7 we read — "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground." The remarkable feature in this statement is the fact that a priority in time is given to the physical basis of man's constitution. What is this physical basis as exhibited by the Book of Genesis? It is structurally identical[1] with that physical basis which, according to the same Book, had conditioned the lives of all preceding existences. The same earth which had brought forth the plant, the same earth which had brought forth the animal, is now commissioned to bring forth the man. The man is declared on the lower side of

[1] We mean, of course, the identity of protoplastic elements, not of their proportions.

his nature to have sprung from a common origin with the beast of the field and the fowl of the air, and therefore the writer of Genesis is to this extent in anticipative harmony with the philosophy of Mr Herbert Spencer. Here, as in the philosophy of Mr Spencer, there is an unbroken chain of earthly conditions encircling alike the life of the highest and the being of the lowliest existence, and the life of the highest is compelled to trace one side of its origin to that identical, material agency which has constituted the being of the lowliest and the most primitive germ.

So much, then, for the lower side of the problem. Let us turn now to the higher. The Book of Genesis, as we have seen, recognises the fact that the plant, the animal, and the man are united by a common earthly chain; in other words, it recognises by anticipation those material links of connection which occupy so conspicuous a place in the philosophy of Mr Herbert Spencer. We have seen, however, that this is only one-half of that bond of unity which Mr Spencer himself admits. Even in his seemingly materialistic system there is another and an upper chain connecting the orders of life, as it were, from above. The real agent in the process of evolution is with him a form of transcendental life which he calls by the name of Force, but whose nature he confesses to be inscrutable. It is to the action of this inscrutable

Power that he refers in the last analysis all the changes of species and all the transmutations of environment which are exhibited by this universe. Mr Spencer is therefore more than a Darwinian; he is a Darwinian *plus* a transcendentalist. He goes all the length of Darwin, but he continues his journey after Darwin has stopped. He reduces the different species of existence within the limits of a single, mechanical chain, but immediately afterwards he discovers that the mechanical chain is itself only the symbol of a great, incomprehensible Power, which is the ultimate and the final factor in the whole process of development. Now, if we turn to the record of Genesis we shall find that here again, making allowance for the inevitable difference of expression, the scientific view has been amply anticipated. If the Book of Genesis recognises the existence of a physical element as one of the factors in the production of life, it recognises not less strongly that the causal force of this element is only a borrowed or delegated power, and that the real agent even in the physical process is the presence and the action of the great central Life. If the plant, the animal, and the man seem to spring spontaneously from the soil, this is, after all, only an appearance. So far from being spontaneous agents, the plant, the animal, the man, and the soil itself which seems to give them birth, are all themselves but the passive

instruments of a great, transcendental Life, whose being they are made to manifest. "Let the earth bring forth grass," is not an ultimate statement, not the final account of the matter; the final account of the matter is contained in the immediately preceding words, "And God said." The dust of the ground is said to constitute the material out of which the form of man was moulded, but even this physical side of the process is immediately asserted not to have been physical. "The *Lord God* formed man of the dust of the ground;" the prime agent in the process is even here the great, central Life, and the mechanical chain, the moment it has become visible, is instantaneously superseded by the presence of a Power which transcends all mechanism and disowns all limits.

If, now, we ask what, according to the Book of Genesis, constitutes the distinctive point of difference between man and the lower animals, the answer will not be hard to find. The difference between them, according to this Book, does not lie in the notion that the animal has only a material origin, while the man has in addition a transcendental origin; the Book of Genesis does not admit this to be a fact. It holds that material conditions were in themselves no more able to produce the animal than to produce the man; that alike for the animal and for the man there was

required the intervention of the theocratic mandate, "God said." But according to the writer of Genesis the man is higher than the animal, simply by reason of the fact that there is more of God in him, that he is a higher manifestation of the power of that central Life which constitutes the being of all other lives. The life of the animal has equally its *source* in God, but it does not derive from that source an equal amount of vital power. The pre-eminence of the man consists in this, that he exemplifies more fully the majesty of that Life from which he, in common with the inferior creatures, has derived his origin. This clearly appears, we think, in the very words which follow the description of man's physical creation. After having formed him from the dust of the earth, it is significantly added that God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. We understand the words to mean, that God distinguished man from the orders which had preceded him by making him to a certain extent partaker of something analogous to His own creative power. Let it be remembered that in the view of the writer of Genesis the creative power of God was first manifested in the breathing of His life; the Spirit or breath of God moved on the face of the waters. This Divine breath, therefore, is here taken as the highest symbol by which to describe His creative power. When it is said that God breathed into man's

nostrils the breath of life, it is implied that God gave to man the power to reproduce in a certain measure His own creative energy, inspired him with somewhat of that force which had fashioned the elements of chaos into beauty, symmetry, and order. Man came upon the scene no longer as a mere spectator, but as an intelligent actor and a possible fellow-worker with God. He was not singular in owing his origin to the Divine Life: he shared that honour with the beast of the field, but he was distinguished from the beast of the field in bearing the *image* of that Life. That image we believe to have been man's possession of a creative power—the fact that God breathed into him that very breath[1] which originally had moved upon the face of the waters.

Let us now ask, whether in this account of the creation of man there be an indication of any leap in the order of the universe. If it be so, then this narrative of Genesis must ever stand opposed to the records of the doctrine of evolution. The doctrine of evolution admits of no leap in the order of nature; it allows no paroxysm, no catastrophe, no sudden or unexpected emergency, to break the ordinary sequence of that great chain of continuity which binds the highest to the lowest. Any system of religion, or any system of philo-

[1] The Hebrew word differs from that in Genesis i. 2, but Hebrew reverence may account for this.

sophy, which recognises or involves the presence of such revolutions, is thereby placed upon a footing outside the domain of the evolutionist. But is the narrative of Genesis in this position? We say that it is not. We hold that this narrative, in the account it gives of the creation of man, has not introduced this climax as a leap in the order of nature. In passing from the animal to the man, it indeed recognises the fact that nature has made a vast progress, but it holds the progress to have been made not by leaping but by stepping. It does not admit that on the spiritual side there has been any real addition to the sum of the universe, for the breath of life which constitutes the height of the new creation is itself but an impartation of that original Divine breath which moved at first over the unconscious elements of chaos. Neither can it be said that on the physical side of man's nature the narrative of Genesis exhibits a leap in the order of creation; it assigns to him a physical basis of life identical with that which it assigns to the orders which had gone before him. It is true that the Book of Genesis does not point to a missing link which forms the boundary between the animal and the man; but let us remember that the evolutionist himself has hitherto failed to discover that link. All that we can here say is, that whenever the evolutionist

shall make the discovery, he shall find that the discovery is in perfect harmony with the conclusions of the old faith. No modern theist would deny that there must be somewhere a line of boundary between the animal and the man. Nay, if we mistake not, the very account of man's creation in Genesis ii. 7 would readily lend itself to the doctrine of a missing link in the order of intelligence. The formation of man from the dust of the ground, and the breathing into man's nostrils of that breath of life which constitutes his humanity, would seem to have been not one act but two. For all the writer of Genesis says to the contrary, there may have intervened between these acts a long period of ages, an interval as wide as that which we imagine to have divided the transitional developments of the preceding creative days. There may have been an intelligence in which the physical dominated over the spiritual, before the advent of that intelligence in which the spiritual was designed to dominate over the physical.

It is on this ground that we must regard the question of man's antiquity as one of no theological import. That which makes man, as we know him, is not his form but his spirit. If you could prove the existence ten thousand years ago of a human hand and of an implement wielded by that hand, the proof would not in the smallest

degree be at variance with any doctrine of the ancient faith. This human hand might belong to that lower humanity which God formed from the dust of the ground, and which seems to have preceded the advent of what is called the living soul. We shall therefore leave here out of account all discussion as to man's antiquity: whatever difficulties might be raised by such a discussion, they would not be difficulties of a distinctively modern type. The doctrine of man's antiquity, if it be an error, is not an error distinctive of the doctrine of evolution, nor in any sense peculiar to the spirit of modern science. It had itself its home in antiquity, in the heart of the ancient world, in the creeds of Brahmanism and of Confucianism, where the spirit of modern science was unknown. We shall therefore pass by this question on the other side. We are confining ourselves purely to those points in which the old religious faith comes into contact, and is thought to come into collision, with the new doctrine of evolution. So far as we have yet gone, we have found, indeed, abundant points of contact, but not a single point of collision. We have found that on the question of creation, on the question of special creation, on the question of the difference of species, and on the question of the Divine origin of life, the new faith has willingly lent itself to the old. We have now reached the highest manifestation of life of which

our experience is cognisant—the being of Man. We have found that science and religion alike have been willing to recognise at once the community of his nature with other natures, and the superiority of his personality to other lives: we now go on to see whether the old faith's traditional account of his primitive condition is one that can be harmonised with the spirit of the nineteenth century.

CHAPTER VIII.

EVOLUTION AND THE PRIMITIVE MAN.

THERE are two opposite tendencies which in every age have divided the minds of men—the tendency to glorify and the tendency to depreciate the past. The former is the spirit of the popular mind; the latter is the impulse of the man of science. The popular mind has in all ages reverted with longing gaze to the vision of a glorified past. It has ever been prone to hold "that the former days were better than these," that the world as it has advanced in years has become more laden with cares, and that the increase of its knowledge has been the increase of its sorrow. It has therefore seen the climax of human joy not at the end but at the beginning of human history, and has regarded every step in the progress from that beginning as an additional distance interposed between itself and the golden age. The scientific spirit, on the other hand, has uniformly taken another and an opposite view. If the popular

mind has seen the good old times in the past, the spirit of science has beheld the fruition of all things in the future. To the spirit of science the past is not glorious, simply because it is not scientific. It looks upon all happiness as dependent on economical conditions. The welfare of man, in its view, is inseparable from the latest results of civilisation—from the abbreviations of time and space, from the interchange of national sympathies, from the spread of commerce, from the diffusion of the useful and the ornamental arts of life. It will therefore consent to see no paradise in the past. It entertains for the most part an optimistic view of the possibilities of man and of the prospects of human development, and therefore it places its highest hope in the advent of that future age which shall witness the accumulated result of the ripening of intellectual power.

In no sphere have these tendencies been more markedly displayed than in the respective criticisms which science and religion have given of the doctrine of a Fall. In the view of the old faith, man was originally sinless. The period of his existence most free from sorrow was just the first age of his being. His transition from the first to the second age was not a step upward but a step downward, not an elevation but a decline. To the new faith, on the other hand, such a belief is an entire delusion. On this

scientific view human power decreases as we descend the stream of the past, and it is never at so low an ebb as when we have reached the source of the stream. Primitive man is man in his least powerful state; it is man without scientific knowledge, without philosophic thought, without reflective reason, without the strength of virtue.

It would seem at first sight as if these two views were utterly irreconcilable—as if the ideal of man demanded by the doctrine of evolution were the diametrical opposite of that ideal presented by the old faith. Evolution implies by its very definition that there is something which requires to be perfected: if we are asked to believe that man was perfect at the beginning, where shall we find room for any further evolving of his nature? But let us look deeper at the doctrine of the old faith. *Does* it teach that man was perfect at the beginning? A moment's reflection will convince us that it is not so. The picture of primeval man as given in the Book of Genesis is not the picture of a perfect being, but of a perfectly innocent being. It is the picture of one who is potentially virtuous and actually harmless. It will be seen that such an innocence is perfectly compatible with a very primitive condition as regards the secular knowledge of this world. So far is the Book of Genesis from identifying the life of human innocence with a

life of scientific knowledge or of philosophic thought, that it is not afraid to assign the birth of such knowledge and of such thought to the period immediately succeeding the death of human innocence. That which is a fall in the moral sphere is represented as a rise in the sphere of intellectual evolution — "the man is become as one of *us*, to know good and evil." It is broadly declared that not from the unfallen but from the fallen humanity proceeded the earliest discoveries in science and in art. Tubal-cain becomes the instructor of artificers in brass and iron. Jubal becomes the inventor of musical instruments. Enoch, the son of Cain, becomes the builder of the first city. Lamech, a descendant of the same degenerate race, is represented as giving an impulse to the spirit of poetry.[1] Any form of knowledge is intellectually higher than simple innocence, and the knowledge of the difference between good and evil is not unphilosophically described as having exerted a quickening influence on the life of the intellectual powers. Nay, those who accept the old faith need not go beyond the testimony of their own Scriptures in order to find the proof that the first Adam was not the climax of humanity; for St Paul himself has sharply distinguished between the perfection of a mere negative innocence, and the

[1] See the song of Gen. iv. 23.

perfection of a life which has triumphed through suffering. "The first Adam was made a living soul; the second was made a quickening spirit."

With the life of the primitive man began the possibility of a life of morality. In the preceding spheres of creation, morality was impossible. What rendered it impossible was the absence of dualism in the life of the creature, which really implied an absence of choice. The animal had no struggle in its nature, because the animal had only one life;[1] there was no room in its being for contrary or divergent motives. But when man came into the world, there came into the world for the first time a being who had two lives within him. He had an earlier and a more primitive life which connected him with the beast of the field—a life whose basis was the dust of the ground out of which he was taken. But besides this life man had a later and a higher one. Over the dust of the ground there had been breathed that Divine Spirit which had transformed the physical into the mental, and had caused the creature of the earth to become a living soul. Here, then, was a dualism, a double consciousness, a possible struggle of motives. For the first time it became a possibility that a creature of the world should at one and the same moment be exposed to the influence of

[1] The Divine Force only acted upon it from without; it was not inbreathed.

two alternatives, and that which was originally a possibility became in the sequel an actual fact. Man—the highest product of creation—just because he had in him the elements of two worlds, was made a theatre of conflict. The two worlds that were within him each entered upon a struggle for the possession of his soul. That lower sphere, that dust of the earth which bound him to the animal nature, became within his heart a constantly downward impulse, tempting him to follow the life of the animal and to concentrate his whole being on the acquisition of personal gain. That higher life, on the other hand, with which the Divine breath had inspired him, became an impulse ever tending in an opposite and upward direction, prompting him to seek the fulness of his joy in a source not accessible to the life of the animal—in the union and communion with that primal Force whose breath had constituted the true dignity of his being.

The primitive innocence of man was broken by the mere fact of this choice, but we cannot agree with Augustine that in the view of the writer of Genesis the choice was the beginning of his fall. In itself it was a rise, and might have resulted in the transition from innocence into conscious virtue. It is quite certain, at all events, that conscious virtue could not have been attainable by any other method than a presentation of the alternatives of

good and evil. The power to choose was in itself a step in the direction of evolutionary progress; it brought the highest product of creation nearer to the ideal of the second Adam, to the measure of the stature of the perfect man. Let us pursue, however, the narrative of Genesis, in so far as it relates to the subject in hand. The result of man's choice was in the meantime adverse to himself and detrimental to his fortunes. The solicitations of the animal world obtained the mastery over the solicitations of the higher and spiritual world, and man fell. He fell back from that stage of development which he had reached by the inbreathing of the Divine Spirit, and which had thereby become a natural and normal phase of his being; he took a new departure from a place lower down in the scale of creation, and nearer to his primitive origin in the dust of the ground. We presume it will not be questioned that in a system of evolution such a fall was possible. In point of fact, the evolution of the universe as exhibited by modern science reveals myriads of such falls. Evolution is a progress over the whole mass, but it is a progress which is reached not by successive advances, but by movements of alternate advance and regress. There are multitudes of cases in which we witness the spectacle of a development downwards. We see in whole races what we often behold in individual human families—a law of

degeneration. There are evidences of lost faculties in the process of evolution. It is a matter of everyday experience that the mere disuse of a mental or bodily power tends materially to impair it, and if persisted in, will ultimately destroy it. That which reveals itself as a principle in the individual life of man, has revealed itself as a fact in the generic life of the universe. The evolution of the universe as a whole has not been interrupted, nay, it may be even said to have been furthered, by the struggles and the regresses of those individual races which constitute its process: nevertheless the fact remains that the regresses have taken place, and that the law of degeneration has alternated with the law of progress.

There is no scientific objection, therefore, to the fact of a human fall, any more than to the fact of an animal fall. The modern doctrine of evolution is perfectly consistent with the ancient faith that man has in a spiritual direction receded from that stage of development which he occupied at an earlier day; has lost by perversion or by disuse, or by both, the possession of a certain faculty which at one time constituted a mark of his distinctive greatness, and brought him into more immediate contact with the powers of a higher life.

But the great question comes to be, What has been the actual effect of this fall of man upon his present condition? Does he occupy by reason of

it any position in the world which he would not have occupied if it had not befallen him? It is here that we stand upon the threshold of what has always been regarded as one of the greatest questions of antagonism between theology and science. It is averred by those Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments which embody the conclusions of the old faith, that man possesses by reason of the Fall something which he ~~would not have~~ possessed if he had not fallen—the liability to death. It is averred, on the other hand, by ~~modern~~ science, that the liability to death has no historical relation whatsoever either to the Fall or to the existence of man—that death existed in the world millenniums before man was created—nay, that the presence of death was inseparable from the very beginnings of life. Here are two diverse statements; the question is, Are they contradictory statements, or are they simply different points of view from which the same truth may be considered? If they are contradictory statements, one of them must be erroneous; and in this case we should be compelled to give our verdict in opposition to the old faith. There can no longer be any question of the fact that death was not brought into the world by man. Geology has clearly revealed that, thousands of years before the existence of the human species, generations of living creatures came and passed away, and that they passed away by that precise

method whereby human lives now disappear—the method of death. In the light of such a revelation, it is confidently and pertinently asked with what consistency it can any longer be affirmed that death was simply the punishment of sin, and that it obtained entrance into the world as a result of the fall of man.

There is, however, an ulterior question which here emerges into view. Does it follow, because death was not a *result* of the Fall, that it had therefore no relation to the Fall? We hold that it does not follow; and we shall endeavour to lay before the reader certain considerations which might enable a man of the old faith still to adhere to this article of his faith, without disparaging the position or denying the conclusions of the modern scientific doctrine.

And first of all, let us consider what is the article of the old faith now under discussion. The doctrine of the Bible is popularly thought to be, that death results from the presence of sin. This is, to say the least, a partial and a one-sided statement. Strictly speaking, the doctrine of the Bible is, that death results from the absence of *holiness*.[1] It will be seen that these two propositions do not amount to the same thing; the former involves the latter, but the latter does not necessarily involve

[1] More strictly still, the absence, from the centre of being, of that Divine Life which is the source of all survival.

the former. Wherever we see the presence of sin, we see to that extent the absence of holiness; but we may witness the absence of holiness where we have no call to recognise the presence of sin. Both the plant and the animal, for example, reveal the absence of holiness—that is to say, they both reveal a nature of which holiness cannot be predicated; yet it would not be correct to say that either the plant or the animal reveals the presence of sin. St Paul has truly said that sin is not imputed where there is no law; in other words, that there can be no sin where the nature is simply instinctive and uncontrolled by a higher nature. Neither the life of the plant nor the life of the animal is under any such control, and therefore neither the plant nor the animal exhibits the presence of sin. But both of them *do* exhibit the absence of holiness; in other words, neither of them can be said to be in possession of virtue. It is one thing to be free from a bad nature; it is another, and a very different thing, to be endued with a moral nature. There is a difference, as Augustine points out, between the lifelessness of a stone and the lifelessness of a corpse. The lifelessness of a stone is simple negation; it is its nature not to live. But the lifelessness of a corpse is *privation*; it is the want of something which the body ought to have had, and which it has lost. The two states are spiritually quite different: nevertheless the effect

of each is precisely the same; the privation of life and the negation of life are both the absence of life. The illustration seems to us thoroughly to meet the question in hand. The plant and the animal are in relation to holiness in a state of negation; their nature does not extend to moral ideas. The life of the man, on the other hand, is in relation to holiness in a state of privation: we feel instinctively that he wants something which he ought to have, and which it belonged to his original nature to possess; and therefore in his case we count the failure to possess it as a sin. None the less, the plant, the animal, and the man are in this respect precisely in the same position; they are each and all of them liable to death from the absence of holiness. In the two first cases the absence of holiness is the result of nature; in the last it is the result of degeneration: but in each its effect is the same—death.

When the apostle says, "The wages of sin is death," it now becomes clear that his words need no longer sound as an anachronism. They need no longer be interpreted as in collision with the modern scientific spirit, or with the facts which that spirit has revealed. The apostle says that death is the wages of sin, because he holds death to be the inevitable lot of that animal nature into which man sank *by* sin. He does not consider it sin in an animal to be an animal; none

the less does he recognise the fact that the carnal nature, however sinless, is not therefore virtuous—that to be carnally-minded is death whether the possession of that character be the result of nature or the result of degeneration. Death was the nature of the original creation, because the original creation was material. Death was the nature of the plant, because the plant was simply vegetal. Death was the nature of the beast of the field, because the beast of the field was merely animal. In none of these cases was death a source of blame. But in the view of St Paul, and in the view of the writer of Genesis, the liability to death became a source of blame in the man. Man had in him a material nature—a vegetal nature and an animal nature; but these were subordinate parts of his being, and over and above these there was breathed a higher nature—a breath of the life of God. That man should any longer be merely material, merely vegetal, merely animal, was henceforth a degradation; it was to sink into that death which had been the common portion of all his predecessors. Death was no degradation to his predecessors, because it *was* their portion. Man's double creation had given him a nature additional to theirs, which, because it was a nature higher than theirs, was thenceforth to be the law of his actions. When he violated the higher to gratify the lower law, when he preferred the dust

of the ground to the inbreathing of the Divine Spirit, he sank back into a state of death; and in his case the state was inherited not merely as the result of an animal nature, but as the legitimate penalty of a deliberate choice of inferiority—as the wages of sin. No man, we venture to think, will affirm that such a view of the question is either unphilosophical or unscientific.

Let us now inquire what were the grounds on which man might have hoped for exemption from the common lot of his predecessors if he had continued in his original condition. We are inquiring, of course, purely into the interpretation of the narrative of Genesis, and are avoiding all extraneous speculation. We want to see whether that narrative is or is not compatible with the modern theory of evolution. Now it is the distinct doctrine of the modern evolutionist that there can be no leaps in the order of creation, that no new element can intervene in the progress of the universe to add to the original sum of universal being. The addition of such a new element would be the death of the evolution principle, for it would be equivalent to the introduction of a miracle. But if we suppose the fact that into the midst of a world of death there has come a being naturally gifted with immortal life—if we imagine that on a region where everything has hitherto been perishable there has risen the light

of an imperishable soul,—have we not thereby introduced that very new element which must destroy the principle of evolution? Can any two things be more unlike one another, more at variance in their nature with one another, than an object which is perishable and a being that is imperishable? If at a certain stage of the world's development the imperishable has been grafted on the perishable, have not the stages of its normal development been thereby themselves superseded by a miraculous leap or paroxysm which has accomplished in a moment what ages of evolution could not achieve?

A deeper reflection, however, will entirely alter our view of this subject. For let it be observed that, according to the Book of Genesis, the introduction of an immortal soul was not an addition to the original sum of the universe.[1] Whence did man derive his immortality? Not from the addition of a new force, but from the impartation of an immortal Principle already existing in the universe: "God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and he became a living soul." The immortality which constituted the higher life of man was the immortality of God, and therefore, so far from being new, was simply an appropriation of the oldest thing in the universe. Let us remember

[1] We have already pointed out this fact in a paper read to the Pan-Presbyterian Council of 1884, and printed in its Transactions.

that in the view of Mr Spencer himself there *is* in the order of nature one existence that is immortal; it is that primal and basal Force which constitutes the being of all other things. Amidst all the perishableness of individual forms, and amidst all the transmutations of individual energies, Mr Spencer perceives that there is one Power which is everywhere persistent—that is to say, immortal. Now this is precisely the doctrine of the Book of Genesis—nay, the doctrine of the whole Old and New Testaments. The Bible recognises only one immortality—the immortality of God. No creature in the universe is in itself immortal; every creature in the universe is in itself liable to death. To make a creature immortal, it must be filled with the life of God; man himself could only receive immortality by having breathed into his nostrils the breath of the imperishable Divine Life. That is the reason why Judaism speaks so little of the immortality of the soul, so much of the life of God. God is Himself its immortality, and it knows of no immortality outside of Him. In *His* presence is fulness of joy, at *His* right hand are pleasures for evermore. Therefore the sole question with the Jew is, Who shall abide in His tabernacle? To be driven out from the presence of the Lord is his symbol for annihilation; to be beset by that presence behind and before is his synonym for life eternal. It may be thought that

the doctrines of eschatology are at variance with this view, but in reality it is not so. Three opinions have been entertained as to the ultimate fate of humanity at large. Some hold it to be the teaching of the Scriptures that all men shall be saved; in this case they shall all live by the life of God. Some hold it to be the teaching of the Scriptures that a portion of the human race shall be annihilated and a portion perpetuated; in this case also, all who live shall live by the life of God. A third class hold it to be the teaching of the Scriptures that a part of humanity shall exist in a state of blessedness and a part in a state of penalty; even in this case it must be affirmed that, in so far as mere vitality is concerned, collective humanity shall live by the life of God,—"As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

The bearing of all this on the doctrine of evolution will be manifest. Here, let us say, are placed side by side two forms of life—the one animal, the other human. Between these forms of life there is much in common; but in one respect they are contrasted: the animal is by its nature perishable, the man has in him a germ of immortality. One naturally asks if this transition from the mortal to the immortal does not involve a leap. The answer from the standpoint of Genesis is: It is a leap as regards the animal, but it is not a leap in the order of nature; it has added nothing to the original sum

of the universe. The immortal life which the man possesses is not a new creation; it is the impartation of something already in existence. The immortality of the human soul is the immortality of God. Man has in him the germ of eternal life, simply because he has in him the breath of that Divine Life which makes him a living soul.

It may be said that we have here sacrificed to the doctrine of evolution a belief of the popular mind. We may be told that in giving such an interpretation to the statement of Genesis we have denied the soul's *natural* immortality. This, however, is a mistake. We do not deny the natural immortality of the soul by saying that its immortal life is based on its union with the life of God. We hold, on the contrary, that man apart from God occupies an unnatural position, and that he only rises to his true nature when he realises his union with the Divine. We hold that immortality was only natural to man when the breath of the Divine Life had been breathed into his nostrils, and that the moment this breath was withdrawn immortality became unnatural to him. This is clearly the representation of those Scriptures which embody the old faith. Eternal life is henceforth represented only as "the *gift* of God." As long as the breath of the Divine Spirit was within the spirit of man, he held immortality by right—that is to say, by nature. But when the breath of the

Divine Spirit passed outside of him, he could thenceforth receive immortality only as a favour from without. We understand the statement of Genesis to be this: Unfallen man had the seed of immortality in *himself;* he possessed it as a part of his nature. As yet, however, he possessed it only spontaneously, and, as it were, unconsciously. He imbibed the breath of the Divine Spirit as the plant imbibes the breath of the natural day—that is to say, without realising the wealth of his possession. In order to make him realise it, it was necessary that he should choose it; and in order that he should choose it, it was necessary that his innocence should be destroyed. The moment the alternatives of good and evil are presented to a human soul, the innocence of that soul must pass away. The passing away of the innocence, however, may be either a spiritual elevation or a spiritual degradation. There are two ways in which a soul may get rid of its innocence: it may rise from it, or it may fall from it. In either case there will be an intellectual advancement; because the death of innocence in itself always implies the advent of knowledge. Man, therefore, in order that his innocence might be broken, was called to choose between the alternatives of good and evil—between the life of that Divine Spirit which constituted the immortal seed within him, and the life of that dust of the ground which

formed the basis of his material constitution. He chose the latter, and thereby he placed himself outside the influence of the immortal principle. His nature became like the nature of his predecessors—a constitution liable to death. It did not follow from this that he had henceforth no hope of a future existence; what did follow was, that if he should receive a future existence it must come to him as a gift and not as a right. The seed of immortality was no longer in himself—in other words, it was no longer natural to him. In accepting the dust of the ground in preference to the breath of the Divine Life, he had himself become unnatural, had fallen beneath that stage of development which ought to have been his normal starting-point, had touched again the confines of the animal world.

Let us now see at what stage we have arrived in the evolution of the world. We have come to the end of one period of evolution, and we have reached the beginning of a new and a different period. The creation of man marks the climax and the close of the development of nature; the fall of man marks the beginning and the foundation of the development of mind. With the creation of man the evolution of physical life, so far as we have any record on the subject, came to an end; God rested. We have no evidence whatever that since the opening of the human period there has in the world of

physical life been any operation of the evolution principle. We are aware, indeed, that many, in the absence of evidence, hold the continuance of that principle as a matter of scientific faith; but what is simply a matter of scientific faith cannot yet be regarded as even a scientific hypothesis. Sir John Lubbock, in a recent address to the British Association, stated that it was a popular misconception to imagine that the evolutionist held the Darwinian principle to be in operation now. He was ready to admit that the species animal and the species man were now distinct, and that an impassable gulf stretched between them. We do not quote his words, but simply his thought, and that only from memory; but the admission made such an impression on us at the time, that we do not think we can have mistaken his meaning. If, then, an authority like Sir John Lubbock can regard the original process of physical evolution as a process which is now suspended, we may take it for granted that there is not in existence a fragment of evidence to support the belief in its continuance, and that the verdict of the Book of Genesis remains unreversed,—"God rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made."

But if the principle of evolution concludes one stage of its development in the creation of man, it enters on a second and higher stage in his fall. The fall of man may be regarded as the birth of

his intellectual nature, not because it *was* a fall, but because it was an end to his life of innocence. The same intellectual birth would of course have been equally produced by his rise, or, in other words, by the conquest of his first temptation. As it was, the one compensating feature in the fall was the fact that the destruction of man's innocence did actually introduce him into an intellectual world—a world in which the distinctions of good and evil were no longer concealed by a life of spontaneity, but where the spontaneous had given place to the conscious, and the conscious had become the source of a deliberate choice. From this stage, therefore, dates the beginning of a new evolutionary development—a development in which the agent is no longer material but spiritual, an evolution in which the goal is no longer the perfection of the structure but the maturity of consciousness. Man is to begin the course of his upward progress from the lowest step of the mental ladder, and is to regain by suffering and by struggle that height from which he has fallen. He has to conquer again the ground which he has lost, and to plant once more within his heart the seed of immortality. His last state is to be nobler than his first, inasmuch as it is to be won by conquest. It is no more to be inherited as a merely natural possession; it is to be possessed anew by struggle, and to be made natural

by personal appropriation. The first Adam was perfect without suffering, and when suffering came he fell; the second Adam is to be perfect through suffering, and mightiest in the hour of his tribulation.

It is no part of the province of this work to trace the different steps in the development of this second and higher evolution, any more than it was a part of its province to trace the development of the first and lower one. In point of fact we have not attempted to trace the first. We have made no effort to exhibit the ascending gradations of the evolution principle, or to mark those shades of transition by which one phase of physical structure has passed into another. To do so would have been to write a philosophy of evolution, than which nothing is further from our present purpose. In treating of the primitive man, we have been brought for a moment on historic ground; but this has been merely incidental. The sole aim which we have in view is to answer the question whether the old faith can live with the new—whether the fact that nature *does* work by evolution is inimical to those doctrines which have hitherto constituted the religious belief of the most civilised and elevated of mankind. We shall therefore avoid all efforts to follow the development of the mental evolution, as we have avoided all attempts to trace the progress of the physical one, and shall confine

ourselves again purely to the question with which we have here specially to do. We have now arrived at a new phase of that question. We have seen that in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments there is virtually, though not formally, sketched out a plan of human development—a plan by which the spirit of man regains possession by conquest of what originally he had held only by right of birth. If the truth of that plan be conceded, it is clear that there must have been in the process the operation of a higher agent than the human soul: the very existence of such a plan presupposes the existence of a Divine Providence. The question, therefore, which now opens before us is this: Is the doctrine of evolution consistent with the doctrine of Providence? We must inquire whether that view of nature which the principle of evolution implies is compatible with that view of God which the spirit of religion demands; whether a universe whose parts on every side are bound together by the links of an iron chain, is consistent with the action and the superintendence of a great benevolent Power whose aim through all the manifestations of nature is the development of the living soul. A consideration of this subject must be reserved for the next chapter.

CHAPTER IX.

EVOLUTION AND PROVIDENCE.

WE have now arrived at that part of the subject which immediately concerns us as living beings—How are we to think of God as related to ourselves? It is, after all, a matter of comparatively little importance whether the Divine Power acted immediately or mediately in the creation of the physical world or in the generation of the first forms of life; but it is a matter of vast practical importance whether we can think of this Divine Power as at present active in the universe, and whether we can see in His action the tendency towards the accomplishment of a definite and a benevolent plan. It is on this question that one of the greatest scientific difficulties has seemed to present itself. Nowhere has the conception of nature introduced by evolution appeared more unfavourable to the old faith than in its attitude towards the doctrine of a Divine Providence; and as this is a vital matter involving ultimately the choice between faith and atheism, it

becomes incumbent on us carefully to examine whether the modern doctrine of evolution is really so adverse to the old view of Providence as on the surface it appears to be.

Let us first endeavour to ascertain where lies the supposed incompatibility between the modern doctrine of evolution and the old belief in a providential guidance. Perhaps we shall best reach this knowledge by considering in the first instance where the incompatibility does *not* lie, as this is a point on which there is a very prevalent misconception. It is frequently said, for example, that the unity of nature which is taught by modern science is incompatible with the continuous action of a Power that transcends nature. This statement is directly contrary to the averment of science itself. We have seen that, in the evolutionary system taught by Mr Herbert Spencer, the main factor in the process is just a Force or Power that transcends nature, and that without the continued action of that Force or Power there could be no possible action of any other agent. With such an admission from the lips of the most pronounced representative of evolution, it would surely be the wildest folly to assert that the unity of physical nature is a barrier to our ancient belief in the possible co-operation of a Power that transcends nature. Again, it is sometimes said that the establishment of the modern doctrine of evolution has destroyed the possibility

of a teleology—in other words, has made it impossible for men any longer to believe that this world is presided over by a Divine purpose and plan. This statement is also contrary to the fact. The most advanced evolutionist in existence never has affirmed, and never shall affirm, that evolution is *incompatible* with design.[1] It is not too much to say that if the existence of God were visibly demonstrated, and we were called upon to conjecture beforehand with developed faculties what the mode of His providential action would be, we would unanimously select evolution as that method the most dignified and seemingly the most worthy of the Divine. It is the merest truism to affirm that a power which acts continuously and according to law, must always be a higher object of reverence than a power which acts impulsively and without regard to law. With such an instinctive conviction in the heart of human nature, it would be contrary to all reason to assert that the establishment of the doctrine of evolution would render impossible our belief in a providential plan.

The barrier which, in the view of modern science, seems to exist between the doctrine of evolution and the doctrine of a designing Providence, is of a different nature from either of these.

[1] Spencer speaks of "the naturally revealed end toward which the Power manifested throughout evolution works." — Data of Ethics, § 62. Huxley also admits that evolution is not incompatible with "a higher teleology."

It is not built upon a notion that there is no room for the action of a First Cause amid the continuous agency of so many second causes, nor does it lie in any belief that the reference of natural phenomena to a principle of evolution is in itself at variance with the presence of design in the universe. The difficulty lies here: The establishment of the doctrine of evolution, while it is never held to render the existence of design impossible, is often supposed to render the existence of design unnecessary. If the being of a God were visibly demonstrated, the mode of evolution would, as we have said, be the mode in which we should look for His working. But it is held that the visible demonstration of God's being is itself rendered impossible by the doctrine of evolution, inasmuch as the doctrine of evolution accounts by natural law for those phenomena which formerly were supposed to be due to supernatural agency. It does not say that the fact of natural phenomena being referable to natural law is sufficient in itself to prove that they had no original place in the thought of a designing Mind, but it is supposed to ask what need there is to call in the aid of such a designing Mind when everything He has designed can be equally well accounted for without His design. The point of conflict, therefore, between the modern doctrine of evolution and the ancient belief in a designing Providence, is believed to be the fact that evolution

would render the existence of design unnecessary. The scientist of the nineteenth century would hold as strongly as Archdeacon Paley that design implies a designer, but he would ask that in the first instance the existence of design should be scientifically demonstrated. It used to be taken for granted that birds had received wings to enable them to fly; the tendency in our days is to affirm that birds are able to fly from the fact that in the course of evolution they have received wings. It was formerly habitual to say that the eye was made for the purpose of seeing; the tendency in our time is to say that because an eye happened to be made, sight followed as an inevitable necessity, and that as the necessity *was* inevitable, all idea of designing choice is thereby excluded.

The first and leading question then is, Is there or is there not design in the universe? Has Paley's argument become obsolete by the destruction of its minor premiss? Once establish the minor premiss, and no scientist will dispute any other step of the argument; prove that there is design in nature, and the conviction will become universal that there has been at work a designing Mind. But the doctrine of evolution seems at first sight to have negatived Paley's minor premiss by accounting for Paley's facts on a totally different principle. Is there any possibility of getting back to the theistic position of the last century, of

seeing in the structure of nature the evidence of a presiding thought and intelligence? Clearly, if the question is to be solved, it must be solved by a shorter road than the solution of the problem whether birds fly because they have wings, or have wings in order to fly. Is there a shorter road? We think there is. We believe we shall be able to pass by this question on the other side, and to find the solution of the problem by a more excellent way.

Let us concede then, for the sake of argument, what we do not concede in point of fact—that the doctrine of evolution renders unnecessary the operation of final causes in physical nature. There still remains, however, a region of nature which is not physical, or which, if the evolutionist insist in regarding it as physical, must be held to be an exception to the rule: we allude to those phenomena which are comprehended under the general name of life. The evolutionist admits the phenomena of life to belong to the sphere of nature, and some go so far as to refer them to the sphere of physical nature. Now there can be no question that if life belongs to the sphere of nature, we have the evidence in nature of the existence of design. No evolutionist will pretend that design has not been one of the factors in the process of evolution. One of the most powerful factors in evolution has been that principle of natural selec-

tion which has resulted in the survival of the fittest. But in a large number of instances that principle has been worked out voluntarily and designedly. The bird has been attracted towards a mate of beautiful plumage; and in so far its selection has been not merely natural, but voluntary. The weaker animal has been attracted towards a mate whose strength can protect it; and in so far its selection has been the product not simply of spontaneous nature, but of deliberate design. Eliminate design from the process of evolution, and you would eliminate the world of life as now existing. We cannot even tell to what extent the actions of what we call instinct have been really voluntary actions, but we may be quite sure that in every case they have been totally distinct from the acts of mechanism. The higher we ascend in the scale of being, the more distinct from the acts of mechanism do the manifestations of life become, until at last, in the spirit of man, we reach a personal demonstration of the presence of design in nature. For here we are brought face to face no longer with an inference, but with a fact—a phenomenon of our own consciousness. We find within ourselves the operation of a designing principle so distinctly selective and voluntary that we give to it the name of will. We meet in that personal experience which is to us the final stage in the development of nature, with a power whose distinctive feature

is the conception of a purpose, and a faculty whose distinctive end is the ability to select its *own* end.

Before we go a step further, however, we are reminded that we must verify our position. It seems strange that such a position should need verification; one would have thought that the testimony of consciousness would have been deemed final. It so happens, however, that in the view of many, the fact of the freedom of will being the testimony of a merely subjective consciousness, is the very thing which renders its existence suspicious. We are told that man is not really free—that he is really a piece of mechanism whose every act is dependent on the disposition of his structure. We are told that at any moment of his life he could not do otherwise than he actually does—that, in point of fact, his present moment is determined by his past, and that his latest action is the inevitable result of all his preceding acts. Yet this objection evades the real question at issue. What we want to account for is not the existence of freedom in man—which may be an open question—but the existence in man of an *idea* of freedom, which is a fact attested by consciousness; we want to know, not why man is free, but why he believes himself to be free—a fact which needs all the more explanation if he be *not* free. Whence did the delusion proceed; whence did an idea emanate so contrary to the actual state

of the case, on the supposition that man is a piece of mechanism? We are aware that an answer has been furnished to this question. We are told that man's delusion concerning the freedom of his will has arisen from the fact that there are certain things of whose causes he is ignorant. We are reminded that wherever we do not know the cause of anything, we are accustomed to consider ourselves self-acting and independent, and that we only come to feel our dependence when we arrive at a knowledge of causes. We believe it to be exactly the reverse. We believe the case to be, that where men are ignorant of causes they are uniformly weak-willed—in other words, incapable of realising their own freedom. The Greek had a greater sense of freedom than the Brahman; and why? because the Greek had penetrated further into a knowledge of natural causes, and felt on that account that he had more power to utilise the materials of nature. The Brahman knew nothing of natural causes, and therefore he felt himself a slave; he crouched before the majesty of a physical nature which he could not reduce to law, and therefore could not utilise. Man's sense of ignorance will never account for his sense of freedom. His sense of freedom has grown with his civilisation, and is most strongly felt in the ages of his ripest culture—in those ages when his knowledge of nature is the most extensive and the most varied,

and where his power to recognise causes is the widest and the most unerring.

How, then, are we to account for this sense of freedom, or, if you will, for this delusion that we are free? The question is, Are we to explain it as a result of one of the factors in the evolution principle; or, are we to explain it as having had its origin apart altogether from the evolution principle? Let us take the latter supposition first. Shall we say that the sense of human freedom has sprung up spontaneously as a result of certain combinations of matter? This is a view which has actually been taken by some evolutionists; yet we have no hesitation in saying that it is a view which, if accepted, would destroy the principle of evolution, and it is in the interest of evolution that we here reject it. If the sense of human freedom has sprung up spontaneously out of something which is not free, then we have in the most pronounced form a creation out of nothing. The creative miracle to which such a supposition would reduce us, is one in comparison with which the miracle of Genesis grows pale; for this would be not only a creation out of nothing, but a creation effected *by* nothing—a supernatural effect without a supernatural cause. Under these circumstances, if we would pay any respect to the principle of evolution, it is incumbent on us to reject a theory which, if accepted, would nullify all its conclu-

sions, and cut at the very root of its possible development.

But if we reject this alternative, can we accept the other and remaining one? If we say that the sense of human freedom has not its origin *apart* from evolution, can we find for that sense of freedom an origin *in* evolution? Is there any factor of the evolution process which would account for the existence of a sense of freedom in the human soul? If we adopt the philosophy of Mr Herbert Spencer, we believe that there is. Let us remember that in the system of Mr Spencer the prime factor of all is what he calls *Force.* Now human consciousness has only one conception of force—the idea of will. We do not say that will is the only force in the universe, but we do say that man has no conception of any other force.[1] Strictly speaking, we have no idea of material power in any form; power is a purely mental conception. We look abroad upon the face of nature and observe there certain changes; we say that there must have been some power to cause these changes. The inference is perfectly just, but let us never forget that it is only an inference. The ideas of cause and power would never have been even

[1] Spencer himself says that our notion of force is a generalisation of the sensations we have in producing changes.—Prin. of Psy., vol. ii. § 348. See also Wallace's Theory of Natural Selection, p. 368 (London, 1870); and Argyll's Reign of Law, fifth edition, p. 123 (London, 1867).

suggested by the objects of nature but for the presence within us of a determinative will. Nature reveals to us nothing but the manifestations of change; when we assign to these manifestations the attributes of power and causality, we are really clothing nature in the garments of our own imputed righteousness, and are beholding in the operations of the physical a reflection and a mirror of our own human intelligence.

Here, then, in the bosom of evolution, we have a factor whose presence and action would explain the mystery of the sense of human freedom. Mr Herbert Spencer says that the prime agent in all evolution is force, and we know as a matter of experience that the only force with which we are conversant is will. If we put these two facts together, we shall reach a probable solution of the mystery — a solution compatible with the most advanced evolutionism, and at the same time consistent with the doctrine of the ancient faith. If we say that the primal Force of the universe is itself an intelligent Will, we shall thereby have explained the existence of the sense of freedom within us; we shall have discovered in the process of evolution an agent sufficient to account for the fact that such a peculiar manifestation has been evolved from nature. If we reject this view, we render every sphere of creation incomprehensible, but no sphere so incomprehensible as the province claimed by the evolu-

tionist, for we shall be confronted by the spectacle of a creation out of nothing unparalleled in the annals of religion—a creation which has brought the sense of freedom out of the depths of slavery, and has fashioned the consciousness of will out of those lifeless materials whose distinctive feature is the absence of volition.

Here, then, as it were by a new discovery of the presence of design in nature, we have been brought again to infer the presence of design in the Power that transcends nature. It is no longer, indeed, the old argument from design by which we have reached this conclusion; it is rather a return to that cosmological argument which seeks in the effect a cause adequate to produce it. It is really a regress to the most ancient attempt in the world to prove the personality of the Power that transcends the world. "He that planted the ear, shall He not hear? He that formed the eye, shall He not see?" It is, indeed, no part of the present work to establish the scientific validity of this argument. We are not here seeking to prove the truth of theism; we are simply seeking to show that the truth of theism would not be affected by the establishment of the most advanced form of evolution. It is therefore enough for our present purpose to discover that there is nothing in the doctrine of evolution which would militate against that belief in a designing Providence which lies at the basis of all

religion; nay, that the doctrine of evolution itself would be encountered by an insurmountable obstacle, if it were not allowed to assume the possibility of an intelligent Will as one of the factors in the universal process. We shall rest satisfied, therefore, with this conclusion, and shall pass on to consider whether, assuming the existence of this intelligent Will, we can discover any harmony of sentiment as to its purpose in the teaching of evolution and the teaching of religion.

Now the teaching of the old faith as to the purpose of the providential Will is from the very beginning clear and explicit. It moves upon a settled plan. The final aim to which it tends is the development of the human soul,—the raising of the human soul into a species of equality with the Divine life, "that we all may be one." The six days of creation move towards man as their climax and their justification; if God sees each of them to be very good, it is because He sees each of them in the light of that seventh morning when He finds His rest in communion with the human spirit. It seems to us that we have a very strong indication of this in the seeming discrepancy between the accounts of creation given in the 1st and 2d chapters of Genesis. In the former of these narratives the animals are made before man, and man comes forth as the latest product of nature; in the latter it would seem as if man were made

before the animals, and the animals created merely with a view to his kingship,—"And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof." Discrepant as these accounts seem to be, they are in our view perfectly reconcilable with the facts of experience. There is no fact of experience more attested than this, that the climax or completion of an author's work is the earliest object in his thought. The climax of his work is the latest thing to be worked out in order of time, but for that very reason it is the first thing to be conceived in the mind of the author; it is that which prompts him to begin his work, and it is that which sustains him in the process of its continuance. We believe that in the 1st and 2d chapters of Genesis we have an illustration of these two different points of view. The creation is first represented in the actual order of its procession from the hand of the Divine Artist, and therefore the spirit of man here appears as its finishing touch. But the mind of the writer of Genesis reverts to the fact that what was the finishing touch in time was the first element in thought. He sees that the spirit of man, though the latest to elaborate of all the works of God, was just for that reason the motive power which lay at the foundation of these

works, and constituted the ideal of the Divine Creator. He sees that the deliberative design, "Let us make man," was really the mainspring of all the other creative acts of God, and that when the Divine Spirit moved upon the face of the waters it was travailing with the birth of the human soul.

This, then, in the view of the old faith, is the goal of the providence of God in the history of the world—the existence and development of spirit. What, now, in the view of the new faith of evolution, is the goal of that agency which Mr Herbert Spencer calls an inscrutable Force? However inscrutable it may be previous to its action, the moment it has acted it has left traces behind it, and these traces we are distinctly able to follow. It is therefore a pertinent question to ask what, so far as we have hitherto gone, has been the tendency of that great primal Force which the most advanced representative of modern science recognises as the main agent in the process of evolution? Nor can the answer be for a moment doubtful. The main result of the process of evolution, according to the testimony of its own advocates, is the survival of the fittest; in other words, the gradual approximation towards a type of being which shall be free from the mutations of the types that have preceded it. And be it observed that the type which modern science seeks is one not

merely of generic but of individual survival. Evolution, by the definition of Mr Spencer, is the procession from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous—that is to say, from the state in which the individual is absorbed in the mass to the state in which the individual asserts itself over the mass. And the actual history of evolution amply corroborates this view. Evolution is the history of the process of individual survival,—the history of that process by which life progressively asserts itself over nature, and by which mind eventually dominates over life. It is therefore a progress from the lowest to the highest type of known existence. It does not follow from this that the lowest type has ever generated or can ever generate the highest; the process of evolution is one thing, its agent is a very different thing. What we mean is, and what Mr Spencer means is, that the inscrutable Power at the basis of the universe has evolved the forms of the universe from the simplest and most rudimentary elements. The base of the ladder of evolution rests on the ground. The creation is originally in a state, not of life, but of death; and the process of evolution is not the struggle of death with life, but the struggle of life with death. It may be thought that we have here a distinction without a difference; we have, in truth, a distinction of the widest import. It has often been objected to the doctrine of a benevolent

Providence, that it was no mark of providential care to bring into the world an element of death to struggle with the element of life. This difficulty at least has been dispelled by the system of evolution, and in so far it has done good service to the old faith in Providence. It tells us that death was never sent into the world in order to struggle with life; that, on the contrary, it was life that was sent into the world in order to struggle with death. Death had from the very beginning the possession of the field; to say so is only, in other words, to say that the world began with the formation of matter. The first step in the creative process was the creation of that whose seed was not in itself; in other words, of that which in itself was dead. The first appearance of life on the scene was the beginning of struggle, but on that very account it was the beginning of a higher manifestation of Divine benevolence. If there had been no life, there would have been no struggle: but the absence of the struggle would have been the restriction of the benevolence; it would have simply indicated that death reigned supreme. The appearance of life brought conflict, because it brought a disputed sceptre. It placed in the field for the first time an antagonist to the empire of death, a disputant of its authority, a rival to its power; and thereby it broke that calm which through the undivided sway of death had reigned

uninterrupted since the foundation of the material world.

It is not difficult to see that for a long time the conflict between the two antagonists would be of a very doubtful nature. Death was at first more powerful than life; this was involved in the fact of its long and uninterrupted possession. Life came as an innovator; it was not on its own ground, and therefore it was not at first at home in the struggle. The very principle of the survival of the fittest gave death the original advantage. Fitness means adaptation to an environment, and death was more adapted to the first environment than life. Hence it is that the history of evolution is the history of a progressive vitality—we might almost say, of a progressive immortality; it is the record of that process by which life gradually obtained such a mastery over death as to enable it to become a living soul. We see at first only the action and reaction of the forces called physical in the constitution and preservation of material forms. Then we begin to witness, as it were, the prophetic anticipations of something higher than the material in those strange selections of a geometrical symmetry which we describe by the name crystallisation. Next, life itself begins to appear, at first simply spontaneous life, unconscious of its own being; then sentient and active life, conscious not yet of its being but of its surroundings; lastly

voluntary and reflective life, conscious at once of its surroundings and of itself. Such is the scheme of evolution—a scheme so progressive that it cannot be accidental, so orderly that it cannot be unintelligent. It seems essential to the very existence of the scheme to presuppose the existence of a typical plan after which it is aiming and towards which it is shaping. At the base of the ladder is death, at its centre is life, at its apex is life "more abundantly." Is there any reasonable possibility of avoiding the conclusion that what is last in realisation was first in thought, and that the underlying purpose of the principle of evolution was the bringing into existence of the spirit of man?

The goal, then, of evolution, is the production of immortality, the bringing forth of something which shall resist the original tendency to die. That which qualifies an object for survival is, in the language of evolution, said to be fitness. We must not imagine that the survival of the fittest is equivalent to the survival of the materially strongest. No doubt the only test of strength is just the power of an object to survive, but what enables an object to survive is not always its *physical* strength. On the contrary, it is not too much to say that the history of evolution is the history of that process by which physical strength gradually becomes the least potent agent in the development of the world, and by which other forms of fitness than the physi-

cally strong gradually take the place of the older and once all-absorbing element. At first the physically strong alone survived; there was no room in the world for aught beside masses of matter and the mighty forces which played around them. By-and-by the extensive began to give place to the intensive, and forms of life successively and progressively dominated over forms of matter. But that domination was not due to any superiority in the possession of physical strength; on the contrary, the new forms of existence were, in respect of such strength, quite inferior to the old. Had the struggle between them been conducted on this basis, there can be no question that the old would have vanquished the new. But the struggle was not conducted on this basis. The strife for survival was not a strife between the physically strong and the physically stronger; it would not be far out of the way to describe it as between the physically strong and the physically weak. The organisation which life brought into the world was in itself much more tender and liable to perish than those material forms which it came to supersede in the order of creation; and if eventually it succeeded in superseding them, it was not by reason of its superior physical power, but because it had brought into the world a new species of power whose existence was compatible with the existence of physical weakness.

For this leads us to remark, that with the entrance of life upon the scene there begins to emerge that type of being which is best described by the name of sacrificial. The moment life is planted on the globe there is planted the necessity for sacrifice. The process of evolution thenceforth progresses by the one surrendering its life for the many, and the many for the more. The life of sacrifice, like every other form of creation, is itself a development, and is progressively unfolded. At first it is involuntary; the surrender is made as the result of compulsion, and in submission to the necessity of things. But with the development of instinct there comes the beginning of something like a sacrificial spirit, or of that which may constitute the germ of such a spirit. The instinct of self-preservation ceases to be sole master of the field, and is compelled to share its empire with another and a higher instinct—that which impels the animal to provide for its offspring. This is no doubt still a species of compulsion, but it is no longer a compulsion of the old sort. If the animal is compelled to sacrifice, it is no more compelled from without but purely from within; its necessity has ceased to be a necessity imposed by outward nature—it has subsided into a need imposed by the nature of its own being. At last there comes upon the scene a creature capable of a form of sacrifice higher than either of the two foregoing, and with

the birth of the spirit of man the gradation is potentially complete. In the spirit of man the life of sacrifice is no longer involuntary and compulsory, nor is it any longer merely the result of an instinctive impulse; it becomes for the first time a deliberate and voluntary act. For the first time in the evolutionary history of the world there appears a being who, without any dynamical compulsion either from without or from within, has the ability to choose the path of sacrifice, and to surrender his personal joy through the simple motive of impersonal love. This is the type which the evolution principle has reached in the formation of the first Adam. But, as we have already hinted, it is as yet only potentially that man has such a power. In point of fact, we have seen that the first Adam failed in the actual exercise of that sacrificial power which existed within him. He did not attain in action to the ideal type of his own being. His error lay in descending from a higher to a lower sacrificial plane. The ideal type of his being urged him to crucify the animal within him; he preferred, instead of this, to fall back into the life of the animal, to sink into that dust of the ground out of which he was taken. The first Adam, therefore, did not really complete the creation of man, did not fulfil that sacrificial type which was the promise of his being. Another and a higher stage of humanity was

wanted even to complete the ideal of the first creation. The sacrificial life had after all been only breathed into the nostrils; there was wanted a life whose inmost spirit should be animated with the breath of sacrifice, and whose distinctive characteristic should be the impartation to others of a quickening power.

It will be seen that this development of the principle of evolution is thus at the same time a development of the principle of suffering. "He that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow," is a sentiment which has obtained place in those sacred writings which represent the doctrines of the old faith. The old faith and the new are thus at one in finding a niche for sorrow in the natural order of development; the old faith declares that it is involved in intellectual development itself, the new that it emerges out of that process which intellectual development implies. The old faith and the new have this in common, that they both assign a reason for the existence of something which to the eye of common observation seems in a providential system unreasonable; they both claim for suffering a place in the order and not in the disorder of the universe, and in so doing they both exalt our view of the universe as we actually behold it.

It has often, indeed, been observed, that the actual existence of animal happiness decreases as we

ascend the ladder of being. The increase of knowledge is verily an increase of sorrow — we might almost say, an evolution of sorrow. As we proceed from spontaneity to consciousness, and from consciousness to self-consciousness, we proceed from the absence to the presence of care. One of the poets of ancient Israel has very strikingly expressed this thought in his description of the comparative unrest of man in the order of creation: he tells us that the sparrow has a house and the swallow a nest for herself, but that the human soul longs and faints for a place in which to dwell. The sentiment is very beautiful, and it is not less scientifically true. If happiness be the fitness of an object for its environment, then man is of all creatures the least in possession of happiness, for he is of all creatures the least in harmony with his environment. This fact of man's comparative unrest in creation has seemed to many a blot in the system of Providence. It has been to them a source of wonder that the greatest existence in the circle of earthly things, and the existence which confessedly forms the centre of that circle, should be less in possession of rest than the creatures which occupy the circumference. But it is when we turn to the law of development that we find the best vindication of the ways of Providence. There are two ways in which an object may be unfitted for its environment; it may be

unfitted by defect, or it may be unfitted by excess. A creature may be too small for the conditions which surround it, in which case it will be crushed by them; or it may be too large for the conditions which surround it, in which case it will be oppressed by them. The appearance of man upon the scene was manifestly an introduction of the latter case. Here was a being, gifted with natural powers, whose action was much more accelerated than the action of the powers of nature. It was inevitable that such a being should in process of time outgrow his environment. Now the outgrowth of one's environment is at one and the same time a source of sorrow and an evidence of dignity. It involves that sorrow which springs from evolutionary unfitness, from the absence of adaptation between a life and its surroundings; it necessitates a sense of want and a feeling of privation. Yet the very existence of a feeling of privation which the environment of life cannot supply, is itself an infallible proof that the life has been to some extent enlarged and dignified—an unmistakable evidence that it already holds within itself the prophetic anticipation of an environment more ample and more suited to its higher being. Therefore it is that in the teaching of the old faith there is ever a distinction drawn between two orders of sorrow—a sorrow that does, and a sorrow that does not, need to be repented of. There is

ever a distinction drawn between that suffering which is simply sensuous, and that suffering which is pre-eminently supersensuous—between the misery that springs from the love of the animal nature, and the unrest that flows from the sense of that nature's inadequacy. What is meant by that utterance which is written on the very threshold of the temple of Christianity—"Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted"? No religion would contend that mourning is in itself a sacred thing; and Christianity in particular bases its opposition to sin on the argument that it leads to sorrow and death. But the mourning which Christianity pronounces blessed is a sorrow which originates not in the presence but in the absence of death. It comes from the fact that the soul has obtained such an influx of life as to render the old conditions of life no longer endurable. It has become too large for its former dwelling-place, and is therefore unfitted for its past environment. The mourning which Christianity calls sacred, is a sorrow which springs from the same source which caused the heart of the Psalmist to faint within him—the absence in the present state of things of a tabernacle or dwelling-place sufficiently commodious to satisfy the longings of the thirsty soul.

To sum up. The providential law of God's government in the system of evolution is identical with the providential law of God's government in

the sphere of the old faith—the principle of perfection through suffering. The providential place of suffering in the world is more vindicated in the doctrine of evolution than in any other view of nature, except that embraced in the direct teaching of Christianity. The very nature of an evolution from the imperfect to the perfect type of existence demands the presence and the experience of suffering, and demands that the suffering shall be most present and most experienced precisely in those beings whose evolution towards the higher type is most marked and unmistakable. The forces of evolution do not, and cannot in the nature of things, move with equal speed towards perfection; they are not themselves equal in value, and therefore they cannot produce equal results. Life must necessarily move more swiftly than matter towards the goal, and mind must necessarily in its turn outrun the progress of life. This outrunning of progress—this leaving behind of the old environment, though it undoubtedly marks a stage of higher dignity—cannot be divorced from an experience of present sorrow. Old things have passed away, but new things have not yet come; and the developing life, by the very fact of its development, has been in the meantime unclothed without being clothed upon. Such a result cannot be produced without an experience of deep unsatisfiedness, a longing and fainting of the soul.

The sense of unfitness between the life and its environment must inevitably deepen with the enlargement of life itself; it will find its highest manifestation in man, and its most perfect illustration in the highest man. It will be felt increasingly in proportion as the ladder of evolution is ascended; and he who shall prematurely reach the spiritual summit, shall be of all others the least in harmony with his environment. The doctrine of evolution coincides with the doctrine of the old faith in holding that the perfect man must be a man of sorrows.

CHAPTER X.

EVOLUTION AND THE SECOND ADAM.

IN the representation of the Book of Genesis the primitive man did not accept his fall as an ultimate and irreversible destiny. The beginning of his age of calamity was the beginning of his age of prophecy. From the very outset, according to the narrative, he gave evidence that he was too large for that new environment which had at once received and confined him. The evidence appeared in his becoming the recipient of a prophetic vision, in which he saw himself restored to more than his pristine greatness, reinstated on the height of his first eminence not simply by a gift of birth but by an act of moral conquest. It was foretold to his spirit that a time would come in which the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent. The vision was prophetic of a new phase in the order of evolution, whereby that animal nature which now was predominant in man, should be conquered by that sacrificial nature which now

was weak and inadequate. It was the prevision of a time in which the nature which at present was least fitted to survive, was to supersede that nature which now seemed likely to survive for ever.

This beginning of prophecy was really a new departure on the part of man. His spirit was already looking out from those narrow limits that encircled it, towards a great day of restitution in which he should get back his own with interest. Yet even in his most sanguine moments it never occurred to him that the restitution was to be effected by his own unaided power; the day for which he looked was ever contemplated by him as a "day of the *Lord*." He had learned from the traditions of his past that the first man had for a time been stainless, because he had for a time been the partial recipient of a Divine incarnation. The breath or Spirit of God had constituted his primitive glory; if a second glory were to become the heritage of humanity, he felt that it could only do so by means of a similar impartation. It was not by the ascent of man to God that he hoped for the elevation of human nature; it was purely and entirely by the descent of God to man. Nor did he believe that his vision would be fulfilled by a simple regress to the days of Paradise. He recognised the fact that the days of Paradise had been short, just because the Divine

incarnation in humanity had been only partially fulfilled—just because the breath of God had penetrated no deeper than man's nostrils. The time to which he looked forward, and the only time to which he could look forward with any hope, was a day in which man should be the recipient no longer of a partial but of a plenary incarnation, in which the breath of God should permeate not merely his outer organism, but his heart, his soul, his consciousness, his deepest life. Accordingly, the day on which his prophetic eye rests is the day of a new revelation, or, as he calls it, a new covenant. He contemplates the time when God shall put His law in his inward parts and write it in his heart—when the Divine Spirit shall be so poured out upon all flesh that the relation of man to God shall be no longer the attitude of simple obedience, but the relation of a son to a father. He longs for an age, and he anticipates the coming of an age, when outward law shall become that inward law which men call love—and when the necessity to perform moral actions shall be no longer a necessity imposed from without, but an irresistible impulse springing from the Divine life within.

Such was the burden of man's early prophecies. There was, however, another element which lent to these predictions a peculiar force and vividness; we allude to the fact that they centred around a historical person. The age of holiness to which

man looked forward was an age which was to follow the common law of development. It was to have its beginning, not in a general diffusion over the masses, but in the life of a single and solitary individual who was at first to constitute its only representative. The life of holiness was to be propagated from the historic personality of a second Adam, just as the life of sin had been propagated from the historic personality of a first Adam: as man derived his corruption from his union with the latter, so he was to derive his incorruption from his union with the former. Accordingly, man's primitive hope rested originally on an historical incarnation, on an advent of the Divine life on a single human soul. It rested on the time when there should appear in the world one who could emphatically be called the sinless servant of God—one who should fulfil to the uttermost the law of perfect obedience, and keep unbroken to the letter the table of the Divine commandments. In this sinless servant of God the prophetic anticipation of the human heart beheld the medium not only of a new Divine revelation, but of a new Divine life. In him the life of God was, in an altogether unique sense, to be incarnated in humanity; God was to put His Spirit upon him. It was no longer to be that mere external contact which had constituted the short-lived glory of the first Adam; it was to

be the union of heart with heart, the blending of spirit with spirit, the meeting of the human with the Divine.

Now it is the doctrine of the old faith that this prophetic anticipation of the human heart has been actually and historically realised,—that there has really appeared in this world a being corresponding to the ideal desire of the soul of man—a being in whose life the Divine life has been incarnated, and in whose historical experience the new life of humanity has been inaugurated. Before we go one step further, we must ask whether, in the light of the doctrine of evolution, such a faith is scientifically possible? If it be scientifically possible in the light of that doctrine, it will then be time to ask whether its alleged manifestation does or does not present any point of analogy to the evolution principle. In the meantime, the main question lies on the threshold: Is the doctrine of an historical union between God and man compatible with the existence of *belief* in the evolution principle; or—which is the same thing—would the establishment of that belief as a necessary conclusion allow us any longer to hold this tenet of the old faith? It is somewhat remarkable, at the outset, that Christianity claims for her doctrine of incarnation not only a place in history, but what may almost be called a place in evolution. It regards the union of the Divine life with the human

life not merely as something which was consummated in time, but, what is of more importance, as something which was consummated in the *fulness* of time. In making this claim, Christianity seeks to be in harmony with a certain order of human development—in other words, with a certain evolution of law. But the point which we have here to consider is, not the harmony but the compatibility of the two doctrines; we have simply to ask whether the one is the negation of the other, whether the proof of the one would destroy the existence of the other. Until we have disposed of this preliminary question, any further question must be superfluous.

Now it is averred that there is one fact which renders the doctrine of evolution incompatible with the doctrine of a historical union between God and the world; the latter is the affirmation of a miracle, and evolution is based on the principle that a miracle is impossible. Evolution is the doctrine which asserts that all things exist by reason of law; the Christian incarnation is a doctrine which maintains that at one period in the history of the world God interposed to check the downward current of a law of human nature. The doctrine of the incarnation is therefore, it is averred, the assertion of a miracle,[1] and as such it

[1] All the miracles recorded in the New Testament are, strictly speaking, but various modes of this one miracle.

is irreconcilable with a theory of modern science which is based upon the denial of the miraculous.

Let us look at this matter a little more calmly. In what sense does the doctrine of evolution demand the denial of all miracles? There is one sense in which it does demand such a denial; it denies that there can be any miracle coming from outside the field of *evolution.* It refuses to admit that there can be any agency acting in the history of this world which is not already comprehended amongst the agencies that are conducting the evolution of this world; in other words, it refuses to see the operation of any other cause than the causes which are admittedly at work in the actual development of the universe. But we ask, Is this equivalent to a denial of the supernatural? What if one of the causes which are at work in the actual development of the universe be God Himself? What if, as Mr Spencer says, one of the factors, nay, the main factor in the process of evolution, be the movement of that transcendental Force which lies at the base of all things? In this case the miracle of incarnation, so far from indicating a break or breach in the order of evolution, will itself be one of the direct results of that order, owing its origin to the main factor of the process. We all admit, with the man of science, that an absolute miracle would be an impossibility; the most pious Christian in the world would hold this

the most emphatically of all. For what is an absolute miracle? It is a miracle that contradicts the Absolute, or, which is the same thing, it is a prodigy which effects something contrary to the nature of God. The very affirmation of an absolute miracle is tantamount to the declaration that there is something in the universe higher than God —that is to say, higher than the highest. Such a declaration will please neither the believer nor the unbeliever; it is at one and the same moment an impiety and a contradiction in terms. We may take it for granted, therefore, that if the transcendental Force of the universe be, as Mr Spencer says, one of the agents in the evolution of the universe, there can be no miracle outside the range of this evolution. But this leaves a vast margin still for the action of the supernatural in nature. If that which transcends nature be itself the main agent in the natural process, then the process of evolution itself is, by its own showing, a manifestation of the supernatural in the natural, an exhibition of the steps and stages by which the Power which we acknowledge as inscrutable has revealed its presence and its influence in the progressive history of the world. If a union between God and man has ever occurred in history, it can only have occurred through the agency of that Power which the most advanced representative of modern science has placed at the basis of the law of evolution.

For let us just put to ourselves the question, In what respect would Mr Spencer's conception of the universe affect the possibility of the Christian doctrine of incarnation? If we accept Mr Spencer's conception, it can no longer be said that there is any inherent impossibility, nay, that there is any inherent improbability, in a historical union between God and the world. For, according to Mr Spencer's view, that transcendental Force which stands to him for God, and whose distinctive feature is its inscrutability, is already in contact with the world, and in contact with it historically. It is difficult, indeed, to see how in Mr Spencer's philosophy we can avoid going still further; it is difficult to see how, on his principle, we can deny that the transcendental Force in the universe is in contact with the world *progressively*. Mr Spencer himself will not affirm, nay, he will most vigorously deny, that all the manifestations of power in the universe are equal to one another in value. His philosophy is intended to prove that they are not equal,—that there is a decided progress in the development from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous, from the incoherent to the coherent, from the indefinite to the definite. But if we take this in connection with his own confession that every step of this progress is the manifestation of an inscrutable Power, is not his philosophy only an affirmation in new words of that doctrine of the

old faith which sees in the history of this world the revelation of an infinite Will? If nothing can be produced without the contact of the Inscrutable, if everything which is produced is brought forth in progressive stages of excellence, how can we avoid the conclusion that the power which is called the Inscrutable has itself been emptying out more and more of its own being in order to manifest more and more of its highest glory? And if we should be constrained to come to that conclusion, how can we any longer believe that there is an incompatibility between the Christian miracle of the incarnation and the evolutionary miracle of inscrutable manifestation?

We wish now to direct attention to a point which does not appear to us to have hitherto received notice. It has been customary in theological works to institute a comparison between the representation given of the first Adam in the Book of Genesis, and the representation given of the second in the New Testament. That comparison has sometimes taken the form of a historical parallel, oftener still of a historical contrast. But there is one aspect in which, so far as known to us, it has never yet been presented—the analogy of the two representations as regards the subject of evolution. The first Adam is distinctly described in the Book of Genesis as having had a certain relation to the evolutions of life which had preceded

him; the second Adam is distinctly described in the New Testament as having occupied an analogous position. In a work of the present order, whose plan is not theological but scientific, this latter form of comparison is the only one which can have any significance; but it is so pertinent to the present subject, and so illustrative of our view of evolution in general, that we shall offer no apology for devoting a few moments to its elucidation.

It will be remembered that, as we pointed out in a previous chapter, the formation of the first Adam, or primitive man, is described in the Book of Genesis as a double creation; there is an earlier and a later stratum of his being. The earlier or lower stratum is depicted as a creation not rising above the other forms of physical life, except in degree. "The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground." We have said that if any scientist should insist on finding a missing link between the present nature of man and the nature of the animal next to him in intelligence, this representation of the Book of Genesis will give him not only the right to seek for such a link, but the suggestion of where it is to be found. The writer of that narrative distinctly suggests that between the highest of the acknowledged animals and the creature which was inspired by the breath of God, there was interposed a form of existence intermediate in character, overtopping the physical life

of the one without yet attaining the spiritual life of the other. We cannot tell, indeed, whether we are to understand the interposition of an interval of time between the man who was made of the dust of the ground and the man who was constituted by the breath of the Divine Spirit; nor does it matter for our present purpose whether we do or do not suppose such an interval. The point is, that, in the view of the Book of Genesis, the man who was constituted by the breath of the Divine Spirit was superinduced upon the man who was formed from the dust of the ground. That living soul which emanated from the breath of God did not come to an untenanted organism; it came to an organism which was already tenanted by a lower life, and this life it had to take up and appropriate. The living breath of God had to descend upon the world as it found it. It did not supersede the previous stages of evolution in the sense of annulling or expunging them; it planted itself on the latest step of that ascending stair which had risen from the germ-cell of the faintest life, to the being of him who, although still dust of the ground, had in him already the prophecy of the coming God. It is not too much, therefore, to say, that when the breath of the Divine Spirit incarnated itself in the life of man, it took up all the imperfections of that life, nay, all the imperfections of all those previous stages of evolution of

which the creature formed from the dust was but the consummation and the crown. We cannot say that it bore the sins of the world, because we cannot affirm that the world as yet had any sin: to make it possible for the world to have sin, the Divine Spirit itself had first to come. There can be no sin where there is no higher principle to resist, and that higher principle is only given in the life of God. But although we cannot say that the Divine Spirit in the first Adam had to bear the sins of the primitive man, we can say that as a mere matter of evolution it had to bear his imperfection. In descending on the creature whose origin was the dust of the ground, it became heir to a lower nature than itself—a nature whose contact involved the beginning of a struggle in the Divine life, just as surely as it involved the beginning of a struggle in the human. The rest of God was of necessity broken almost immediately after it was begun. It was not possible that the Divine breath should come into contact with the dust of the ground, without initiating by that contact a struggle for survival; and it was not possible that in that struggle for survival the Divine should not suffer equally with the human.

We have already pointed out that, in the view of Genesis, the fall of man produced a putting asunder of the two elements which God had joined together; the breath of the Divine Spirit ceased to

be a power moving from within, and man returned to his original constitution — the dust of the ground. We have pointed out, at the same time, that it was no mere return. In resuming his old place in creation, he resumed it under vastly different auspices. To be the highest manifestation of the physical dust did not involve any sin; it was simply an absence of holiness, involved in the fact that the process of evolution had not reached its utmost possibility of development. But to be a recipient of the Divine breath, and then to fall back again into the physical dust, was a moral degradation; it was no longer simply an absence of holiness, it was the importation into the world of a new agency—sin. We say a new agency, not a new element. In point of fact, sin did not introduce a new element into the world; the animal life in which it imprisoned man was just that normal life which had constituted the nature of his being previous to the outpouring of the Divine Spirit. But when he *returned* to it, while he received the same possession so far as outward elements were concerned, he received a totally different possession in idea. As long as he was dust of the ground by *nature*, his position was natural to him; when he became dust of the ground by choice, his position was unnatural to him—it was *sin* in him. The origin of moral evil involved no new creation on the part of God;

it was simply a change of attitude towards the old creation on the part of man. God had pronounced everything to be good after its kind, and the animal nature after its kind was therefore also good. It implied, indeed, the absence of holiness; but the absence of holiness was natural to it, and so did not make it bad. But when the Divine breath was breathed into man's nostrils, the animal nature which was left within him became merely his lower being. The only course natural for him, the only course which would render him good after his kind, was to follow the dictates of the spiritual; his kind was spirit. In becoming an animal again, he sank into sin: the old materialism which had been sinless in him as dust of the ground, and which was still sinless in the other products of that dust, became thenceforth to him an element of corruption; the change of mental attitude transformed the evolutionary bias of the old object, and imparted a downward impulse to that which originally had indicated only an upward tendency.

It is here that St Paul steps in with a remarkable theological statement, which has too much bearing on our present subject to be passed over in silence. He tells us that the fall of Adam was not merely the judgment on a primitive individual, but an event which influenced the whole of humanity,—"In Adam all die." This statement receives its illustration and its corroboration in

that law of heredity which is one of the factors in the process of evolution—the law according to which like begets like. We do not forget that besides the law of heredity there is another, and in some sense a contrary factor—that principle of concomitant variation by which like does not beget exactly like. One might be disposed to ask St Paul whether this principle of concomitant variation could not of itself have altered the verdict "in Adam all die"—whether the offspring, in its gradual deviation from the parental type, might not by a process of merely physical evolution have attained again to the measure of the stature of the perfect man. But we are quite sure that in this respect at least Mr Herbert Spencer would give his verdict with the Apostle of the Gentiles. Let us remember that in the view of Mr Spencer the prime agent in the process of evolution is the Force called inscrutable. Now the supposition of St Paul is, that in the fall of man this Divine Force was withdrawn from his moral life, and ceased for a time to have any influence over him. Once concede such a supposition, and the conclusion becomes scientifically inevitable. Where could concomitant variation be looked for when there had ceased to be an agent acting concomitantly in the moral life of man? Surely in this case the only possible agency must have been simple heredity, propagation of the old element of sin, the production of

like by like? The only escape from such a difficulty was to be sought in a second interposition of that primal Force which had constituted at the outset the glory of man.

Now it is the doctrine of the old faith that when the fulness of the time was come—when the stage of mental evolution was ripe—such an interposition did actually and historically appear. No believer in the philosophy of Mr Herbert Spencer can affirm that such a doctrine is scientifically incredible. He who recognises the existence of a Power which, in spite of its inscrutability, can manifest itself in the universe in general, and in every part of the universe in particular, ought to have no scruple in recognising the possibility of the fact that the same Power should manifest itself in the conscious soul of a living being. But the point we have now to consider is, not the credibility of the doctrine, but its relation to that other doctrine of *evolution* which is sometimes supposed to be its denial. And here we are specially called to observe the parallel between the evolutionary relation of the first and that of the second Adam. We have seen how in the first Adam the breathing of the Divine Spirit into the human organism was really a breaking of the Divine rest. The breath of the Spirit, by uniting itself to the dust of the ground, became voluntarily the heir to a nature lower than its own; all the imperfections of all the

previous stages of evolution were laid upon it in the moment of its inbreathing. In striking analogy with this is the description given by the New Testament of that greater and more abiding inbreathing which is known to us as the Christian incarnation. Here again the Divine life empties itself—pours out a stream of its being to fertilise anew the being of the creature. Here again this stream of the Divine life condescends to blend with the soil as it actually was, to touch its impurities, to be coloured by its contact. The new life which has come down from heaven, comes down no longer like the first Adamic life upon a merely imperfect being; it descends now upon a sinful being. It incorporates with itself an organism which is morally corrupt, a personality which is perverted, a vitality which is stained. It becomes heir to its unfulfilled responsibilities, to the consequences of its many and long declensions, to its pains, to its penalties,—to that which, although coeval with the existence of matter, has become to the human soul the greatest of all penalties—death; it suffers in and for the sins of the world.

Let it be remembered that we are here looking at Christian doctrines only in so far as they touch the line of evolution. We want to determine whether that touch is one of harmonious contact or one of hostile collision. When we have determined this point, we have said all that at present it

lies within our province to say. No one will therefore imagine that we have intended the foregoing remarks as a theory of the Christian doctrine of atonement; we have intended them simply as an indication of that point where the Christian doctrine of atonement forms a line of intersection with the scientific doctrine of evolution. What we say is, that the Christian doctrine of atonement depends for its validity on the uninterrupted continuance of the law of mental evolution. Let us suppose that, before the second advent of the Divine Spirit on humanity, there had come to humanity an interruption of that law of heredity by which sin had propagated sin. Let us suppose that human nature had been suffered, by one of those leaps or paroxysms which evolution repudiates, to ascend out of its state of corruption into a state of incorruption,—what would have been the consequence as regards that spiritual advent? It would certainly not have rendered impossible the Christian incarnation, but it would have rendered impossible that doctrine of the Christian atonement which teaches that the new life bore the penalty of the sins contracted by the old. That penalty could only be borne on the supposition that the new life came into a humanity which had not been magically nor even supernaturally transformed, but which was still subject to that great principle of evolution whereby the sins of

the fathers are visited on the lives of the children. If the new life was to bear the sins of the world, it could only be by so identifying itself with the world as it actually was, as to become itself a sharer in the law of its being. Hence it is that when St Paul would describe the conditions preliminary to the great work of Christian redemption, he places in the foreground the bold announcement that Christ was made *under the law.* That law of Judaism of which he speaks, was in reality only part of the wider and yet more stringent principle by which the conditions of the past are reproduced in the life of the present, and the consequences of the deed done by our ancestors are reaped in the experience of their descendants. The law to which the second Adam became subject was that law of mental evolution which had brought humanity to the fulness of the time.

More pronouncedly than even the first Adam, is the second represented as the child of development. We do not allude to the fact that the first Adam is described as having had no infancy. We have already more than hinted that there is room for doubt as to whether this *is* the representation which the Book of Genesis designs to convey: it is quite possible that the humanity formed from the dust of the ground may have been the infancy of that humanity which was inspired by the Spirit of God. But waiving this question, it still remains

true that the relation of the Divine life to the normal development of the first Adam is described as much less intimate than the relation of the Divine life to the normal development of the second. The former was, after all, only an outward connection; the breath of God was breathed simply into the nostrils, and did not penetrate the heart. There was no real union, no moral identification, no actually existing reciprocity; the Spirit of the Divine was unable yet to bear the sins of the human. But in the second Adam all this is changed; here we have not only contact but union, not merely inbreathing but incarnation. The aim of the Divine life is to identify itself with the life of the creature; and in the prosecution of this aim it submits to the law of the creature's life. It begins at the lowest stage of human development, and it expands progressively from sphere to sphere. It passes through infancy, through childhood, through youth, to the measure of the stature of the perfect man. It grows in human wisdom and in human knowledge, it learns obedience by the things which it suffers. Its incarnation in humanity is in truth rather a process than an act; it is itself an order of evolution. It is perfect in each stage, but it is not perfect in all stages at once; it adds perfection to perfection. It grows from less to more, from great to greatest. It appropriates one by one the spheres

of humanity, and vanquishes one by one the old forces by which each of these spheres has been at once environed and confined; and it finds its culminating stage in the overcoming of that force which is the last and highest penalty of the human soul—the power of death.

Nevertheless, as we said at the close of the last chapter, it is clear that such a life could not be lived on earth without an experience of the most poignant sorrow. The life of the new man was by very reason of its newness in advance of its environment, and that which morally was its glory became physically its pain. The Son of Man, because He *was* the Son of Man, because He was the prophetic representation of that ideal which humanity should reach in the far future, was necessarily in a state of solitude. He was divorced from His surroundings by the very fact of His greatness; in the treading of the winepress there was and could be none with Him. It was not simply that He was not understood; He was misunderstood. He occupied to humanity a relation of seeming antagonism, nay, to the present state of humanity a relation of real antagonism. That which made Him solitary was not merely a possession on His part of something which the world had not; it was a possession on the world's part of something which He had not—the nature of sin. That which made Him in advance of His

environment was the transcendence of that animal life, the subjection to which constituted the sin of the human race; and that which caused His life to be solitary and alone, was just the inability of the human race to look beyond the limits of their animal nature. They could see no beauty which they desired in Him. Prophecy itself had foretold that it must be so,—had foreseen that whenever the perfect Servant of God should appear, He must, through the very perfection of His service, be despised and rejected of men. If men could have seen His beauty, they would have been already beautiful, already in germ on a level with Himself. The fact that they were not on such a level, the fact that as yet He was but the harbinger of the coming race, was itself sufficient to necessitate His treading of the winepress alone. The forces of the old life were in antagonism to Him—and for a time it seemed as if these forces would be the survivors. It appeared for a moment as if in the battle between the old life and the new, the new would be vanquished by the old. The force of death obtained a temporary victory, and the Son of Man was crucified by the world's sin. But the victory was only temporary and only apparent. According to the sacred record, the Son of Man vanquished death, and ascended a conqueror from the grave. What is more to the present purpose, according to that record He

vanquished death by the great principle of evolution—the survival of the strongest; or as the writer of the Acts expresses it, "because it was not possible that He should be holden of it."

Perhaps it may be thought that on this latter point we ought to have preserved a judicious silence—that here, if anywhere, the narrative of the Christian record is at variance with the principle of evolution. On the contrary, we have no hesitation in saying that whatever difficulties attach to the doctrine of Christ's resurrection, they are not difficulties unshared by the belief in evolution. The animation of dead matter by the Spirit of life is no unprecedented occurrence in the history of evolution. Every evolutionist will admit that it occurred once, in that day when the first germ-cell began to live. It is true, the conditions of life must have been present beforehand; but we do not know what the conditions of life were, and we do know, on the authority of Mr Herbert Spencer, that the real agent in the process was the Force which he calls inscrutable. Let us remember that it is this and no other agency to which Christianity appeals as the source of her central miracle. To produce the resurrection of the Son of Man, she calls in the aid of no other principle than that which Mr Spencer admits to be the prime agent in every process of evolution. If it be so, we cannot say that the doctrine of

modern science presents any barrier to the doctrine of the old faith. Modern science, in her principle of evolution, has indeed proclaimed the impossibility of any interference with the course of nature, or of the inspiration of any form of life not produced by the factors of natural development. But modern science admits that one of these factors, nay, the only real agent of them all, is just that great primal and basal Force which the Christian reverences under the name of God. Christianity, like science, admits that if God be recognised as one of the factors in the natural process of development, there can indeed be no interference with the laws of nature, and no inspiration of any form of life, which is not produced by the process of evolution. Christianity, like science, believes in the ultimate inviolability of natural law, because it believes the most natural of all laws to be that law of the Spirit of life which science in its own language describes as the action of a Force that is inscrutable. Christianity, therefore, would repudiate the imputation of having chosen an unscientific position in recognising as a historic possibility the resurrection of the Son of Man. It would deny that in so doing it has called in the aid of any new factor or of any novel agency. It would point to the fact that it has sought for the cause of life in no other quarter than that wherein evolution itself

has declared its source, like the source of all other things, to lie—in the presence and potency of that inscrutable Force which, itself incomprehensible, comprehends all.

But there *is* a resurrection of Christ which is a matter not of testimony but of experience—the inspiration of that new life which His death brought into the world. Explain it as we may, it remains a fact of history that at the very moment when the spirit of Christianity seemed crushed by the older forces of nature, it suddenly, and, from the standpoint of these forces, unaccountably burst into fresh and irrepressible vitality—a vitality which, through all the changes and vicissitudes of subsequent time, has been steadily intensifying and progressively deepening. The life which Christianity brought into the world has been gradually vanquishing the older forces of nature—not indeed by annihilating them, but by assimilating them to itself. No evolutionist would deny, no Comtist even would refuse to admit, that this life is now at least itself one of the forces of nature, itself the most powerful agent in the development and the preservation of European culture and morals. The spirit of Christianity, in whatever form it may have come into the world, has, now that it is in the world, submitted to become a part of the world's natural law, and elected to follow that order prescribed by

the principle of mental evolution. We have better means of tracing the evolutionary order followed by the spirit of Christianity, than we have of determining the evolutionary order observed by the spirit of nature, for the spirit of Christianity begins, continues, and ends its development within the circle of the individual consciousness. A consideration of that process of individual development will engage our attention in the succeeding chapter.

CHAPTER XI.

EVOLUTION AND THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT.[1]

"THE law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." Such are the words in which the Apostle of the Gentiles describes the process of the new dispensation. They are words which, on the very face of them, reveal the presence of the most startling paradox. That the new life should be subject to law at all, is itself a fact different from our natural expectation; that the law of any life should be the source of freedom, is contrary to the usual mode of human thinking. Yet it is the express design of St Paul to emphasise both of these points as characteristics of the new dispensation. He declares that the new spirit which has burst upon the world is not to be distinguished from the old spirit by the absence of a process of development,

[1] Throughout this chapter we assume—what has never been questioned—that there *is* an evolution of individual life within its own limits.

—that, on the contrary, the spirit of the Christian life is to submit itself to a form of law. The choice which a man is to receive in passing from the life of nature into the life of grace is not the choice between law and licence, but the choice between a lower and a higher law. The difference between the higher and the lower is not that the former is to display less order than the latter, but rather that the former is to manifest such a perfect order that its effect upon the human soul shall be a sense of perfect freedom.

Let us devote a few moments to an examination of the points of contrast which were probably present in the apostle's mind when he distinguished between the old law and the new,—between the law of that downward evolution which, on its moral side, had followed the order of sin and death, and the law of that upward development which had received its initiating movement in the birth of that new Spirit which had emanated from the cross of Christ. His idea evidently is, that the new law of evolution was to be distinguished from the old law of evolution precisely by those marks which indicate the difference between the physical effects of life and the physical effects of death. Let us see what are those marks of difference.

The first thing which strikes us is this, that the energy exerted by the forces of death moves in a

precisely opposite direction to the energy exerted by the force of life. The energy of death acts by disintegration; the force of life acts by combination. Death tends to separate an organism into disconnected parts; life tends to unite disconnected parts into a common organism. The apostle means to affirm that the difference between the old *régime* and the new Christian Spirit is precisely parallel to this. The life of nature, which he calls a state of death, had tended ever to the disintegration of the body politic. Man had been unable to realise his relation to his brother man, had refused to see that he was his brother's keeper. Humanity had been ever more and more passing into a state of individualism in which each of its members had forgotten the fact of his membership, and had come to believe that he lived for himself alone. But St Paul says that the new order of evolution would reverse the effect of the old. The Spirit of life which had emanated from the cross of the Son of Man would, just because it *was* a Spirit of life, exercise a tendency, not of disintegration, but of reconstruction. It would build up what nature had been gradually pulling down. It would take the individual out of his individualism, and place him in the membership of a great body politic, where he would cease to recognise himself as separate from the life of his brother, and would

find even his self-interest to be inseparable from interests not his own.

The second point of difference between the law of death and the law of life consists in the fact that the very same forces which in the former produced corruption, conduce in the latter to the maintenance and the fostering of vital power. Light and air are agencies which produce corruption in a corpse, but they are agencies which nourish the being of living germs. A living creature is more in harmony with surrounding things than a creature that has parted with its life, and therefore the forces of nature which conduce to the disintegration of the latter minister to the sustenance of the former. St Paul declares that when the Spirit of the new Christian life descends upon the old nature of a man, it not only quickens that nature, but it quickens everything around it, enables it to assimilate to itself those objects which formerly had been barriers to its progress. Hence it is that, in the view of St Paul, the Spirit of Christianity brings an increase and not a diminution of individual liberty—"He that is spiritual ruleth all things." The increase of life which the new Spirit brings to the human soul is accompanied by a larger degree of correspondence with surrounding objects. The pure spirit weaves for itself a pure environment; the enlarged nature assimilates to itself the nature of

things which in other days were contrary. St Paul says that the world does not belong to the worldling, but to the man of the Spirit; he alone is able without hurt to avail himself of the materials which surround him, for he alone, by possession of the Spirit of life, is in perfect harmony with his whole environment.

There is a third point of difference between the law of death and the law of life; the former is a process, the later is a progress. The law of life describes an order of upward evolution which tends towards a definite end. The evolution described by death is a gradual deprivation of legitimate functions; the evolution described by life is a gradual appropriation of functions. Hence St Paul says that the new Spirit which has entered into the world has produced a distinct change on the human constitution; it has made its recipient free. Let it be observed, however, that the very fact of the new life being a progress involves the perception of something which in the old nature was less apt to be seen—the appearance of individual imperfection. It is not easy to detect the impurity of individual drops in a stagnant pool; the fact that it is all impure together prevents one from singling out special places. But if we could imagine the water to be gradually undergoing a process of purification in which some parts were affected before others, the impurity of

those others would then appear as a blemish in certain individual drops of the water. The Spirit of Christianity is an agency which professes to purify by degrees the water of life. In the fulfilment of this promise it is inevitable that the appearance of individual imperfections should be much more manifest in the new than they were in the old system. The vision of imperfection only begins to exist when we see placed side by side a higher and a lower manifestation. It is then that, for the first time, the lower manifestation wears the semblance of a positive sin, because it is then that, for the first time, its inferiority is revealed to the eye of the beholder by the presence of a more advanced stage in the order of spiritual development.

The law of the Spirit of life, then, is a law of evolutionary stages, a process of advancement from less to more. This brings us to ask, what are these stages—what is that order of evolution which is described by the new Spirit brought into the world by Christianity? With the actual character of that Spirit, its personality and its attributes, we have here no concern; that belongs to the sphere of theology, and does not touch any question of evolution. But the question of the order described by the Spirit of life as manifested in the world is itself a question of evolution, and cannot be omitted from any survey of the evolutionary system of nature. What, then,

are these stages in the evolution of the Spirit of life? Perhaps we had better first inquire, what are the stages in the evolution of all life as felt in our consciousness? We shall then be able to determine whether the evolution of the Divine Spirit's agency as represented in the Christian portraiture is in harmony with that general order which the Spirit of life everywhere has tended to pursue.

Now it has been generally conceded, and may be verified by individual experience, that the law of life in general is a progress through three stages. The three stages will be found to permeate every department of vital being; but we shall confine ourselves to the only department of which we have any direct experience—our own individual consciousness.

The first stage of human life, indeed, is one which seems to lie behind consciousness; it may be called the stage of spontaneity. It is the period in which the life of the man is in some sense analogous to the life of the plant. The impressions of the heart are felt but not registered, the impressions of the intellect are experienced but not recorded. The opening mind keeps no table of its own contents, is ignorant of the treasures which itself encloses. To awaken it to a sense of these treasures it is necessary that some foreign hand should interfere with them. The life of the mind would continue for ever like the life of the plant if its

spontaneous liberty were not broken by some resisting object, if it were not awakened by opposition to the fact that it has a possession to lose.

That opposition comes to it in its second and higher stage of development. If the first may be called its period of spontaneity, the second may be best described as its period of non-spontaneity. In its first age it was so unimpeded that it was unconscious of its own freedom, and therefore unable to value its own possession. In its second age it finds itself impeded on every hand; clouds and darkness are round about it. It awakes to the fact of its freedom only by the sense of its loss; and the days of childhood, which in their passage were unobserved, are in their retrospect that paradise from which the cares and sorrows of the wilderness have for ever expelled it. This is the period in which the life of man begins to experience an absence of perfect harmony with its environment, and begins to enter on those efforts at readjustment which make the greater part of human existence a life of labour and of struggle.

But there is a third stage of the natural life—a stage which, indeed, from the side of nature, is never perfectly realised, but to which every organism in nature is partially tending. If the first was the period of spontaneity, and the second the period in which the sense of spontaneity was broken by struggle, the third is that golden time

in which the struggle itself is vanquished and the life returns once more to more than its pristine rest. It returns to a rest which is no longer a mere state of spontaneity, but a state of conscious possession, in which the life becomes aware of its peace by the very fact of its cessation from war. This final stage of natural existence is the stage in which the vital principle begins to realise somewhat of the joy of being in harmony with its environment. If there were not even in the natural life a partial realisation of this experience, the order of natural evolution would have been arrested long ago. The fact that that order has not been arrested, the fact that life has still continued to triumph over death, is alone a convincing proof that in some region of its being, the organism has found a point of harmony with the environment in which it dwells, that even in the present system of things there does exist a certain form of rest.

Such, then, are the three successive stages which life exhibits in its natural and normal development. St Paul means to suggest that the new Spirit brought into the world by Christianity has condescended to adopt the old line of evolution, has elected to follow that law of successive stages which has been the order exhibited by life in general. Accordingly, we must be prepared to find that the law of the Spirit of life is just the old familiar law of all vital, mental, and moral evolu-

tion — the law by which the organism proceeds from unconscious liberty to conscious limitation, and from conscious limitation to realised liberty. It may seem a strange thing, even an incongruous thing, that in a work which seeks to derive its materials from the field of science, we should introduce a topic usually deemed so transcendental as that called in evangelical theology the work of the Spirit. We can only answer, it is because the law of the Spirit of life professes to be the law of the spirit of all life. It is because the new life, claiming as it does to come from above, has claimed with not less earnestness to have entered into union with the common forms of human evolution and with the prevailing order of human development. We only take up the work of the Spirit in that point where the work of the Spirit professes to touch the line of natural evolution, and to grow from less to more in the order prescribed by that line. All we have here to do is to investigate and to interpret the facts of the Christian consciousness. Even the materialist cannot deny that these *are* facts. The science of the positivist may and will dispute the account given of their origin, and the explanation offered of their existence in the human mind; but that they do exist in the human mind, and exist as forms of the most potent energy, not even the science of the positivist can deny. Let us then endeavour briefly to collect, arrange, and interpret

these facts of the Christian consciousness, and to see how the law of the Spirit of life describes in its progress the order of universal vital being.

The first stage in the evolution of the Spirit of life is portrayed in these words of St John's Gospel: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." The initial work of the Spirit is here compared to the natural force of the wind. The idea evidently is, that the wind begins to blow before its blowing becomes manifest to the ear. When we first hear the sound we cannot thereby determine whence it has come, because, in point of fact, it has had an existence and a movement previous to the time when the sound first reached our ear. When the wind begins to whistle amongst the trees, we are accustomed to say that it is rising; it would, in truth, be more correct to say that it has risen. What we hear is not its beginning, but only its manifestations; the stage which precedes its manifestation lies behind our consciousness, and therefore the sound does not enable us to tell the moment or the place of its origin: "thou canst not tell whence it cometh." The work of the Spirit is said to stand in an exactly similar relation to the human soul. A man is sometimes asked when the influence of the new life began to act upon him,

and sometimes he puts his hand upon a definite place and hour, and declares that its beginning was there. In truth, what he means is simply this, that its earliest manifestation was there—that it was there he first heard the sound of the wind. No man can be present at his own birth. In every sphere of life—physical, intellectual, moral, and spiritual—the act of birth lies behind the consciousness. It has been asked if a being can live without knowing that it lives. In the first stage of its existence every being not only can, but actually does. Sensation must follow outward impression. The pain of a blow is not contemporaneous with the blow; it succeeds to it. The sensation of existence in general observes the the same rule; we live before we recognise the fact of our being.

The change called the second birth demands, of course, a conscious preparation in the old nature; otherwise there could be no responsibility. The old nature is not in itself the antithesis of the new life; it is a force, and all forces are manifestations of the one primal Force. The antithesis of the new life is not the human constitution, but its disintegration or corruption; and it has never been contended that this disintegration or corruption eradicated the germ of man's primitive being. It is through the germ of his primitive being that man is able to become receptive of a life which

differs from itself simply in being a higher manifestation of that central Life from which it sprang. The change of the second birth, therefore, presupposes and insists upon a recipiency on the part of the old nature. Christianity only contends that the change itself is not an object of actual perception, is not present to the consciousness of the old nature until it manifests itself by its subsequent effects. In order to distinguish the difference between night and day, a man must open his eyes: but even by opening his eyes he will not detect the precise moment in which the sun rises; what he calls its rising is really but the first manifestation to his senses of an event which has already taken place beyond the range of his senses.

There are two things which tend to obscure the work of the Spirit in its first and preliminary stage, and they are both things in which the law of the Spirit of life is in harmony with the law of the evolution of all life. The first of these is the fact that the beginning of the Spirit in the human soul *is* a birth. We popularly speak of birth as the transition from a world of emptiness, voidness, and non-existence into a world of fulness, light, and life. Potentially, it no doubt is so. But the actual process of birth is very far indeed from achieving, or even from suggesting, such a grand result. Between the life of the em-

bryo and the first hours of infant existence, there is to all appearance a very thin line of separation. Birth does not immediately usher the life into a full blaze of consciousness. The new-born infant is practically ignorant of the fact of its own being; and even those faculties of sense which are waiting ready for its use are compelled for a time to lie inactive and dormant. That is the reason why the natural life is never able to give any account of the earliest period of its existence. The facts of that period were not registered even at the time, and therefore they cannot be recalled at any future time. It is in strict analogy with this evolutionary law that a man, even when in possession of the new life, is still unable to tell "whence it cometh." The new life, like the old, had its origin in a birth; and the birth of the new life, like that of the old, was followed by a period in which the impressions made upon the heart and mind fell upon them, as it were, unconsciously, and left behind them no record of their existence.

The second thing which causes the work of the Spirit to be obscure in its preliminary stage is the fact that, like every other form of vital growth, it proceeds from within to without. It is a law of our being that we never observe a phenomenon as long as it is purely inward. The feelings of the human heart do not become objects of our conscious reflection until they begin to experience

some resistance to their exercise from the events and objects of outward life. Many a man is ignorant how fully he loves a friend until that friend is removed by death. The illustration is pertinent to the present subject. The work of the Spirit, beginning as it does in the innermost region of our nature, is not at first in contact with the outward experiences of the world. The man who possesses it is, therefore, originally very much in the position of one who carries a treasure unconsciously within an earthen vessel, and is himself unaware of the great resources which lie at his command. In order that a man may awake to the knowledge of his own spiritual power, it is necessary that this power should be brought into collision with some other and more external power. As long as it is perfectly internal, it must, of necessity, be perfectly spontaneous, or, which is the same thing, perfectly unrealised.

This leads us to consider the second of the evolutionary stages embraced in the work of the Spirit—that stage in which the life of spontaneity passes away, and is replaced by a life of struggle. And here it is that we are confronted by one of the greatest paradoxes of all Christian experience. To a reader of St Paul's Epistle, it must be at once evident and surprising that the period of his greatest inward struggle is not the period when the new life dawns upon him, but the time when

it is nearing its meridian. When the man of Tarsus is first struck by the light from heaven, we hear nothing immediately of any inward struggle. That struggle emerges only in the Paul of the Epistles, in the man who has already reached the ripeness of the spiritual life. It is just at this stage where we should expect to find the man rejoicing in the sense of a vanquished height that we find him oppressed beyond measure with the sense of his own sin. "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?" "There is a law in my members warring against the law of my mind;" "the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; the evil that I would not, that I do, and the good that I would, that I do not,"—these are amongst the utterances that come from the days of his high spiritual culture. His sense of sin seems to increase in proportion to his advance in holiness, and his feeling of distance from the goal becomes more pronounced and painful in proportion as the goal itself is neared.

Yet this experience of St Paul in the field of Christianity is paralleled by every man's experience in every field of thought. The law of the spirit of life is, in fact, a law of vital evolution. All dissatisfaction is the sign of growth, and all growth must issue in dissatisfaction. The region of the new Christian life is no exception to the

rule. The growth of Christian experience is accompanied by a corresponding decrease in the sense of merit, and the heights already gained seem insignificant in proportion as the ideal of duty appears high and luminous. Paul counts not himself to have apprehended just because his eye is riveted upon the mark of a prize which must necessarily seem to him more inapproachable in proportion as he himself comes closer to its attainment. Therefore it is that he and such as he have found the second stage of the Spirit more hard to bear than the first. It has even seemed to them as if the march of the upward evolution had been arrested, and as if they had begun to enter on a declining path. The path, however, is really an ascent, and the shadows that are cast upon its way are shadows caused by light. The increasing sense of sin is the increasing power of holiness, and the increasing power of holiness is the enlarged diffusion of the Spirit of life.

And this furnishes the real point of transition to the third and final stage of the spiritual evolution. If the first was an unrealised calm, if the second was a broken calm, the third is a calm restored, and restored no longer as a state of spontaneity, but as a state of consciousness. Christianity terms it distinctively the peace of God. The peace is reached not by any act of asceticism, not by any actual cessation from the conflict of life, but by

a change of mental attitude towards that conflict. It is reached by the recognition of the fact already stated, that the sense of sin does really proceed from an increased power of holiness, and therefore from an increased spiritual vitality. The man who experiences it rests himself in the conviction that it indicates the presence of a Divine life within him. In one aspect, his sense of sin becomes his comfort, because it implies the diminution of the sin itself. He feels that he never could have awakened to the knowledge that he was breathing a foul atmosphere unless, like the first Adam, there had already been breathed into his nostrils the vitalising breath of an atmosphere which was pure. He takes refuge in the sense of his own demerit as a proof that there is dwelling within him a life higher than his own, which has thrown his own into shadow—that life which St Paul presents to his Christian converts as *Christ in them the hope of glory.*

Now St Paul declares that when a man has reached this third stage of the spiritual evolution he is placed in a new relation towards surrounding things—he enters for the first time into a sense of perfect freedom; "the law of the Spirit of life hath made me free." St Paul would certainly have disagreed with those modern men of science who regard the sense of freedom as arising simply out of our ignorance of law. On the contrary, he

declares that it is only by our knowledge of law, and by our assimilation to law, that the sense of freedom is acquired. He would say that as long as a man regards his spiritual nature as a nature which ought to be exempt from all worldly conditions, that man will feel himself perpetually in a state of slavery and bondage; he will groan under the weight of chains which, it seems to him, he has no right to bear. But the moment he comes to realise that he has a right to bear them, nay, that it is for him a spiritual privilege to bear them, he will then, for the first time, find himself to be free. He will reach his sense of freedom in his assimilation of surrounding law, in his acceptance of that law as the law of his own being. He will enter upon a new life of spontaneity, a spontaneity which shall consist not in his ignorance of causes, but in his power to utilise causes; and his actions shall become more completely voluntary just in proportion as they become the necessary expression of his higher life.

According, then, to the Apostle of the Gentiles, the third stage of the spiritual evolution opens to a man those doors of the present world which were closed against earlier stages. The period of unconscious spontaneity, on the very ground of its unconsciousness, had no relation to the practical work of life. The period of struggle, on the other hand, on the very ground of its being a struggle,

necessarily placed the world in an attitude of antagonism to the human soul. But St Paul says, that with the advent of the third period there comes a power which, even in the midst of the world's struggle, can *keep the heart and mind*, and so keep them that the struggle of the world will no longer be felt as a pain. He says that, when the soul of man has appropriated the Divine life in its full development, that Divine life will confer upon him a power to utilise the world which he did not possess without it. His liberty of diet will increase in proportion to the soundness of his spiritual health. The world is often represented as the antagonist of the spiritual life. The truth is that, in the earlier stages of its development, the world *is* its antagonist. This is only, in other words, to say that it is not yet in full correspondence with its environment. Many kinds of food, which are innocuous, and even beneficial to the man, are hurtful to the child. As long as they remain hurtful, they constitute so many hindrances or qualifications to the child's enjoyment of worldly freedom. But as the physical nature of the child develops, this region of hindrances is gradually abridged, until, in the perfect soundness of that nature, the original antagonism is wholly overcome. This is precisely Paul's view of the liberty of the Spirit. It is a liberty of mental and moral diet, a power to appropriate without injury cer-

tain worldly pleasures and worldly avocations, which, to the man whose spiritual nature is only incipient, cannot become possessions without involving hurt.

Now there are two spheres in which, in the view of St Paul, the liberty of the Spirit operates—the sphere of society and the sphere of religion. Let us look first at the sphere of society. What is that social change which the Spirit of Christianity has produced upon the world, or, to employ scientific language, in what respect has the old order of social evolution been modified by the new? In the old order of social evolution the individual is again and again reminded that he cannot live for himself alone—again and again forced to remember that he is in reality but one member of an organism, and owes his subsistence to the harmony of his life with the life and being of the other members. Now this is precisely the doctrine of the Christian Spirit. Christianity has proclaimed and emphasised the truth that the life of the individual man is not his own—that he lives and moves and has his being in the life of a great organism, of which his own personal existence is but a single member. What, then, it may be asked, is the difference between the social privilege claimed by the Christian Spirit, and the social dependence experienced by the subjects of the old law? If in both systems the individual is only a fragment of

the whole, why should the later lay claim to a freedom which the earlier has never professed to enjoy? The answer lies here: the Spirit of Christianity finds its freedom in that very circumstance which to the pre-Christian age constituted the ground of slavery — the necessity that each life should rest upon another life. And the reason why the new Spirit finds its freedom in a fact which was the old nature's slavery, is that the nature of the new Spirit is love. Freedom is the gratification of one's nature; if it be so, the freedom of the Spirit must consist not in the independence, but in the dependence of the Christian membership. It is in the assertion of this organic unity, without which the life of the individual is meaningless, that the Christology of St Paul presents so remarkable a parallel to a doctrine of evolution, supposed by some to be purely modern. In the system of Auguste Comte, of Mr Herbert Spencer, of Mr Leslie Stephen, of Mr G. H. Lewes, and of modern scientists in general, we are forbidden to study the life of the individual man as if it were in itself a completed whole. We are reminded that humanity is not a mere collective name for a series of mental attributes, but itself an organic life of which the individual is only a part. This was exactly the doctrine of St Paul. He declared again and again that we are members of a body which, while it comprehends us, is yet larger than

we—that we are in ourselves but incomplete and meaningless fragments, and that we derive at once our completeness and our significance from those counterparts of our own individual life which exist in the membership of the organic body. Wherein St Paul differs not only from the Stoics of his own day, but from many of the scientists of ours, is in the fact that he accepts with joyful acquiescence what they receive with sullen resignation. The same principle which contributes to the slavery of the outer man constitutes the liberty of the Spirit; for the Spirit of love must find its liberty in the exercise of that nature which seeketh not her own.

The other sphere which, in the view of St Paul, manifests the freedom of the Spirit is religion, or the attitude of the soul towards God. Paul held that the religious freedom conferred by Christianity consisted in the fact that all hindrance was there removed to a direct Divine communion. In the older system of Judaism man had not enjoyed a sense of direct communion with God; this had been prevented by his sense of the majesty of law. The law had been to the Jew a virtual barrier interposed between himself and the Creator. He had looked upon it as something whose sole design was to remind him of his own inferiority, to keep him in perpetual remembrance of the fact that he was a servant. The law was to him a badge of his

slavery, a token of his bondage. It conveyed to his mind no other notion than that of obedience to a Master from whose mandate there could be no escape, and from whose sentence there could be no appeal; and therefore in its presence he lost his own sense of freedom, and felt his own personality to be dwarfed and overshadowed. But now let us observe in what respect the doctrine of St Paul differs from the doctrine of the Jew. It is not in the abolition of the law that the difference lies; St Paul never believed and never taught that the law was abolished. All the moral requirements of the Decalogue he felt to be as binding upon him as ever they had been upon his countrymen. The freedom which St Paul felt in the new Spirit was a freedom not *from* the law, but *in* the law. That which was abolished to him was not the substance of the mandate, but the sense of its being a mandate; the law still remained, but it was transmuted into love. In the old economy it had constituted a barrier to the direct communion of the soul with God; in the new it had become itself the channel of that communion. In the old economy it had been, as it were, the lightning of Mount Sinai, which warned the human spirit not to seek the Divine presence; in the new it had become itself the light of that presence seeking by its beauty to attract the spirit of man. The change was a change of relation, a change of mental attitude, a

change in the standpoint of the beholder. The law of the new Spirit was not substantially different from the law of the old; the difference lay not *in* the law but *in* the Spirit. The man of the new Spirit accepted the old law of Judaism no longer as a penalty, but as a privilege and as a boon; approached it no longer as a barred gate, but as an open avenue which led directly and immediately to the presence of the Divine.

Now it has seemed to many as if our nineteenth century had reproduced in a new form, and with an aggravated intensity, that spirit of Jewish legalism which so long impeded man's sense of Divine communion. It has been thought that the doctrine of evolution has again interposed between the soul and God the barrier of a law which keeps the human spirit from recognising the nearness of the Divine. If it be so, then there can be no doubt that the modern doctrine of evolution is much more unfavourable to the religious spirit, than was the older doctrine of Jewish legalism. The law of the older doctrine was at least a moral law, and as such it had in it an affinity to the highest nature of man; but the law of evolution might have existed, and did exist where there was no spirit of man at all, and is in its abstract essence simply a law of nature. If the modern doctrine of evolution has placed the law of nature in the place which once was occupied by the life of God, if it has interposed

between the Creator and the creature a mechanical chain of causes and events, which has rendered it impossible either for the Creator to reach down to the creature, or for the creature to rise up to the Creator, we shall then be forced to confess that the spirit of modern evolution is at variance with that instinct of religious communion which it has been the mission of the Christian spirit to foster and to mature. We shall consider this subject in the following chapter.

CHAPTER XII.

EVOLUTION AND DIVINE COMMUNION.

THE aphorism that ignorance is the mother of devotion, has obtained wide currency both amongst the friends and the foes of religion; it has often led its friends to look with disfavour on knowledge, and it has frequently impelled its foes to look with contempt on faith. Yet the aphorism, in its unqualified form, is transparently contrary to the facts of history. As a matter of fact, if we survey the history of the ancient world, we shall find that the ages of devotion have been precisely those ages in which the culture of humanity was most visible and most deep. It cannot be forgotten that the religion which of all other pre-Christian faiths inspired men most keenly with the desire of Divine communion, was precisely that religion of Brahminism which expressed the belief of the most cultured and the most philosophical of ancient nations.

But if the aphorism in its unqualified form is

false, there is a qualified form in which it bears a semblance to the true. There is a species of culture which, on the first view of it, and especially in the view of its early and incipient stages, has frequently presented the aspect of a force antagonistic to the spirit of religion. And this is precisely the form of culture which, as a rule, has distinguished the nations of the West from the nations of the East—has differentiated the intellect of Europe from the intellect of Asia. The culture of the European intellect has been for the most part a culture arising from the study of things without; the culture of the Asiatic intellect has been for the most part a civilisation arising from the study of things within. It is clear at the outset that in relation to the sphere of religion these two phases of mind will naturally tend to occupy different attitudes. The culture which has been born of pure mental contemplation will in itself from the very beginning be in alliance with the spirit of religion, and will tend by its own nature rather to intensify than to diminish the soul's longing for Divine communion. But the culture which has been born from a study of external things, will have in itself a natural tendency to put the thing in the place of the thought, and will thereby, from the very outset, be in danger of interposing a material barrier between the human soul and the object of its religious communion.

Now this culture of the West is what is called distinctively the spirit of science. The name is designed to designate its purely practical character, to distinguish it on the one hand from the spirit of philosophy, and on the other hand from the spirit of religion. It has never professed to be the antithesis of either of these, but it has always claimed to walk on a different road from either,—to investigate by a separate method, to reach its conclusions by a distinct avenue. It cannot be denied that a spirit which in its nature professedly occupies a neutral attitude towards the results of philosophy on the one hand, and the conclusions of religious intuition on the other, may have on the part of many of its votaries a tendency to develop from an attitude of negative indifference into an attitude of positive hostility. But the question is not what effect scientific study may produce upon the *mind;* the sole question is, What is the objective result of the scientific study itself?—in other words, What contribution has it made to the truth of the universe? Has it, or has it not, forced upon the mind any conclusion which is inimical to the old religious intuitions of the heart, any fact regarding the constitution of physical nature which is at variance with the long-cherished hope of communion between the soul and God? That is the one question, the only question between science and religion, and on the answer to that question de-

pends the solution of the problem, whether the old faith can live with the new.

At present we are concerned, not with science in general but with a particular theory of science—the doctrine of evolution. The question which lies before us is this, Would the proof of the doctrine of evolution in nature nullify the conclusion which has been reached by the evolution of the Christian spirit in mind? We have seen that the result of this latter evolution has been to deepen within the human soul the sense of a Divine communion; would the result of the former doctrine be to prove that the conclusion reached by the latter is a delusion and a dream? In answering this question, we shall first inquire into the relevancy of the grounds on which the doctrine of evolution is thought to place a barrier between the soul and God, and afterwards we shall briefly consider whether the doctrine of evolution is more unfavourable to the spirit of religion than that older view of nature which it professes scientifically to supersede.

What, then, are those grounds on which it has been thought that the doctrine of evolution is unfavourable to the sense of Divine communion? It seems to us that they may be all summed up under two great heads,—the seeming multiplication of secondary causes, and the actual assertion of the principle of continuity. We shall direct our attention to each of these in turn.

It is feared, then, that the doctrine of evolution removes God further from man by interposing between the Divine life and the human soul a multitude of secondary causes. And, indeed, at first sight it must be confessed that the allegation appears to be true. To the primitive man the act of Divine communion is in one sense very easy. He has never heard of any intermediate law interposed between himself and the object of his worship, and his worship is quickened by the belief that he is standing face to face with the being with whom he communes. Even to the man of the earlier *science*, there was no necessary sense of any intermediate agency between himself and the object of his worship. He might quite well believe in the existence of physical laws, and yet hold fast to the conviction that the principle of life within him had an origin independent of these laws, and in the sense of that conviction it was perfectly competent for him to separate between matters of science and matters of faith. But the new science of evolution has made this no longer competent. Evolution claims to be not simply a process that applies to the physical creation, but a process which engulfs within its order the entire circle of creation, whether physical or spiritual. Accordingly, the man who accepts evolution cannot accept it as a law that holds good merely for a part of the universe; he must either not receive

it at all, or he must receive it as an absolute principle, holding good for all space and acting through all time. In this order his own individual life must find its explanation as fully and as entirely as the life of material nature; and if he believes that it tends to separate the life of material nature from the being of the great First Cause, he will be equally bound to conclude that it separates his spiritual being from the same ultimate source.

Now it is not difficult to see that with such a view of the case before him, the ardour of a man's religious communion must naturally be very much damped by the prospect of the doctrine of evolution proving true. He has been accustomed to think of his individual life as a spark lit by the hand of God, and it has been this very sense of a parentage derived from the Divine that has constituted the enthusiasm of his hours of religious communion. But when he is told that this individual life has come to him by a process of evolution; when he is informed that the spark has been lit from an earlier spark, and that from an earlier still; when he is pointed to the fact that the humanity within him is but one link of a great chain which stretches downward to creatures far beneath him,—is it not natural that he should lose the sense of his Divine parentage, and that along with it he should lose his hope in the reality of Divine communion?

But while all this is natural and even necessary, it is only so at the beginning, and only so because the first view of evolution is inevitably a half view. For, let it be observed, that in this account which the mind gives to itself of the process, there is one important element left out—an element which, if admitted, would have altered the entire aspect of the subject. It has been altogether overlooked that this process of evolution, so far from being an agency interposed between God and the soul, is really a process which has God for its main factor. What *is* the doctrine of evolution, as represented by Mr Herbert Spencer, its most advanced and uncompromising advocate? It is not the doctrine that at some distant age of the past a supernatural Power threw down a germ-cell of existence, which by its own inherent strength grew and fructified; such a statement would, indeed, be tantamount to the interposition of an entire universe between the soul and the object of its worship. But the doctrine of Mr Spencer is, that the universe needs a transcendental Force or Power for every moment of its existence, and for every process of its development. Neither natural selection, nor heredity, nor concomitant variation, nor environment, are with him the sole nor even the main agents in the process of evolution; the main agent is the great primal Force itself, and all other forces and phenomena are but the symbols and

conditions of its acting. It is a point which often escapes our notice, that in the philosophy of Mr Herbert Spencer there is really something which is not evolved. The most advanced disciple of evolution has acknowledged as strongly as the most pronounced theist, that there is a Force in nature at the back of all its other forces which, while itself the agent in the whole evolutionary process, is itself unaffected by any part of that process. The proof of this is, that Mr Spencer declares again and again that this primal Force is persistent,—in other words, that it continues unchanged amidst the constant transmutations of everything around it. Now if this position be accepted, it will follow that the belief in evolution, so far from withdrawing the spirit of man from the presence of that transcendental Power that lies at the basis of the universe, is itself a belief in the perpetual necessity of that presence. Let the doctrine of Mr Spencer be admitted, and whatever else the religious mind may deny, it will be compelled at least to confess that it has found at last in science the need for a Presence which transcends science. Its sense of communion with God will not only be preserved but justified, and justified by that very doctrine of evolution which was hitherto supposed to be the source of its destruction. In that doctrine of evolution the religious man will still find himself in the imme-

diate presence of the great First Cause. He will be forced to feel as powerfully as did the Brahman that there is really no link of the chain between himself and the Divine object of his communion; that he is every instant face to face with a Power which is unsearchable, with a Force which is transcendental, with a Strength which is persistent, with a Mystery which is inscrutable, and that his own individual life is as really and as fully a product of this Mystery as if in all the realm of nature there never had been any life but his own.

We may conclude, then, that the first ground on which the doctrine of evolution is supposed to be adverse to the spirit of religious communion, is a ground which cannot be substantiated in fact. It rests on a mistaken view of the doctrine of evolution itself. If we accept Mr Spencer's explanation of that doctrine, we shall find that, so far from denying a transcendental Presence in the world, it necessitates the acknowledgment of such a Presence; if we refuse to accept Mr Spencer's explanation as the only admissible one, we shall still be compelled to confess that it is at least a possible view; and such a confession is alone sufficient to save the doctrine of evolution from the necessary imputation of leading to practical atheism.

We come now to the second of those reasons on the ground of which it has been thought that

the modern doctrine of evolution is at variance with the sense of religious communion. It is the fact that in this doctrine every phenomenon of nature is represented as linked on to some earlier phenomenon. The doctrine of evolution represents all the objects and events of the universe as connected by a principle of continuity. In primitive times the great catastrophes of nature were looked upon as isolated phenomena. The savage crouched before the thunder and the lightning because he deemed the thunder and the lightning to be supramundane manifestations,—the special voices of a creative Power pronouncing a special judgment on humanity. But to the scientific mind the thunder and the lightning have nothing special about them at all; they are manifestations just as natural as the falling of the rain or the melting of the cloud. They are forces of nature which arise from causes that human reason itself can discern, and whose effect might have been predicted by any careful student of the phenomena of physical nature. Therefore it is that to the man of science, and specially to the believer in scientific evolution, all the phenomena of nature, whether great or small, are parts of a united system, and dependent one upon another. Each manifestation of nature is the link of a chain; each link supports the being of its predecessor, and accounts at the same time for the life of its successor. The result

is, that in the system of nature, as interpreted by the doctrine of evolution, there is no break and no room for spontaneity; every effect can be referred to a preceding cause within the limits of the natural chain. But if it be so, the religious mind asks, where is the ground for its religiousness? If there is no spontaneity in nature, then there is in nature no possibility of change; and if there is no possibility of change, of what use is the soul's effort after Divine communion? At the very root of the idea of communion lies the thought of prayer. If there be no possibility of change in nature, must not the thought of prayer be a delusion? If the natural chain be composed of links which are fixed and immutable,—if the order of nature has followed a course of evolution which my will is powerless to interrupt and impotent to gainsay,—what purpose can then be served by my offering up a petition which will not arrest the development of the predetermined natural law?

Now there is a point at the outset to which we desire to direct attention, because it is very commonly overlooked by those who cherish fears on this subject. One would imagine from this objection to the doctrine of evolution that it was the doctrine of evolution which first suggested to the believer in Christianity a sense of obstacle to prayer by promulgating the changelessness of nature. The truth is, the changelessness of nature

and the difficulties to prayer, real or imaginary, which it involves, were not originally suggested to the Christian mind either by the system of evolution or by any theory of science whatsoever; they were suggested by a doctrine of Christian theology itself. The essential changelessness of the laws of nature is a doctrine not only of Christian theology but of the Bible. That God does all things after the counsel of His own will,—that the counsel of His own will is an eternal counsel, conceived before the birth of time and of worlds, —that the decrees eternal in the past are perpetuated eternally in the future,—is a creed which runs through the whole length and breadth both of the Old and the New Testament. It is vain, therefore, to say that if the notion of a changeless nature be an objection to the validity of prayer, that objection has been suggested to the Christian believer by the promulgation of the principle of evolution. It has been suggested by a part of the Christian believer's own creed, and a part which he of all men would be least willing to relinquish. It constitutes one of the grounds of his confidence, one of the causes of his assurance. If he could believe for a moment that this anchor of Divine immutability could be lifted, he would feel himself indeed to be drifting on a landless sea.

Nevertheless, the mind of the Christian believer has never been blind to the fact that this change-

lessness of the universal law, which is an article of his own faith, does present a difficulty with respect to the possibility of answered prayer. In Christianity, as in every system of religion and philosophy, men have been bound to recognise two agencies at work, of which the one at first view seems the contradiction of the other. Here, as everywhere else, we are confronted at one and the same moment both by necessity and by freedom. On the one hand, we are apprised that we are in the presence of an Almighty Power, who has foreordained all the laws of nature and determined all the events of history; on the other, we are reminded at every turn that man is a responsible being, gifted with participation in his Creator's nature, and therefore bound, above all things, to seek support and sustenance from Him. These are the two seeming contradictions which belong to Christian theology, but not to Christian theology alone—which constitute, indeed, one of the mysteries of human nature itself, and one of the antinomies which lie at the foundation of its being. Christianity, as we have said, has never been blind to the existence of this antinomy; and theologians in every age have showed their appreciation of its difficulty by the strenuous efforts they have made to bridge it.

What, then, is the method by which Christian theologians have endeavoured to bridge the ap-

parent gulf between the God who decrees from the foundation of the world and the God who answers prayer? It is by divines of the Calvinistic type that this subject has most commonly been grappled with; and as it is they who have expressed the doctrine of Divine changelessness in its most rigorous and unbending form, it is from them that we naturally seek an explanation. Their explanation may be given in a single sentence, and it may be put in a scientific form: they say that the efficacious prayers of devout men are themselves links of the universal chain. The Calvinistic theologian denies that there is any incompatibility between the eternity of God's decrees in the past and His response to human petitions in the present; for he affirms that the petitions were themselves foreseen, or, as he would say, foreordained. In this system, therefore, the links of that chain of historical events, which have been constituted by the decrees of God, have been constituted in order to meet certain mental and moral conditions resident in the soul of the creature. The chain has not been devised on mechanical principles; it has been framed in order to encircle an intelligent being, and to correspond to those movements of his intelligence in which he shall reveal the powers of a voluntary agent.

Now, strange to say, the nearest approach we can find to anything resembling this system is in a

quarter where, of all others, we should least look for it—the system of Mr Herbert Spencer. For we would call attention to the fact, that in the system of Mr Spencer the links of the evolutionary chain are not mechanically united. Rigid as that chain seems to be, it is really not to him an ultimate fact of the universe, nor an ultimate explanation of its laws. Ask Mr Spencer whether the links of the evolutionary chain are bound together by their own evolutionary power, and his answer will not be for a moment doubtful; he will tell you that they are not so bound. He will tell you that these so-called links of the evolutionary chain may, for all we know to the contrary, be mere sensuous appearances, to which the reality, did we see it, would bear no resemblance. He will tell you that in any case there *is* a reality lying behind these links of the chain—a great, incomprehensible, persistent Force which itself *makes* the links of the chain. That Force Mr Spencer will not call material; he virtually refuses to do so when he terms it inscrutable. It is true he is equally unwilling to call it spiritual; he prefers to assume towards it the attitude of agnosticism. But the very assumption of this attitude shows that there is nothing in the facts of evolution which *prevents* a man from holding it to be spiritual. If Mr Spencer, with the facts of evolution before him, can afford to say that he does not know the nature of this

Force, may not a believer in Christianity, with the same facts before him, be allowed to cherish the faith that this Force has the nature of mind? If Mr Spencer should say that evolution is opposed to such a faith, he has then become inconsistent with himself, and has departed from his own agnosticism; for that would be equivalent to saying that we do know something of this primal Force—the fact, namely, that it is not spiritual. When Mr Spencer declares that this Force is inscrutable, he really says that the doctrine of evolution neither enables us to affirm nor to deny anything about it; and this is equivalent to saying that any affirmation which faith may make on the subject, the doctrine of evolution is powerless to contradict.

There is, therefore, nothing either in the doctrine of evolution itself, or in the facts which the doctrine of evolution involves, to prevent a man from holding that the mechanical chain of events and causes has its ground in the providence of a spiritual Force behind them. And yet we must confess that, as a solution of the seeming incompatibility between the changelessness of nature and the possibility of prayer, we should deem this explanation to be neither adequate nor satisfactory. To be told that my prayers were from the beginning foreseen or foreordained, and that the constitution of nature was so ordered as to

meet their requirements, may be very true in point of fact and very comforting in point of utility, but is it a solution of the question which is adequate to my wants as a religious being? The deepest want in every true prayer is the want of God. What a devout man seeks in his petitions is, first and foremost, a communion of his own heart with the Divine nature. It is not too much to say that to such a man the act of prayer is itself a greater motive than its result, for he looks upon the act of prayer as itself giving him the highest boon he can receive—the actual fellowship of his soul with the life of the Divine Spirit. But if the answer to the prayer be merely the mechanical link of a chain which was woven in a bypast eternity, how can it be said that I have any evidence that God is in communion with my soul at all? If an event be foreordained for me, it will assuredly happen to me; but by the time it happens to me, He who foreordained the event may have ceased to think of me: the foreordination in itself would prove no more than the fact that I was once an object of thought to the ordaining Power of the universe. The religious consciousness will not be content with that. What man wants is not the proof that a Divine Power existed in the past, but the evidence that a Divine Power exists now and here. He wants to feel not merely that the connection between his prayer and the order of nature was

once provided for, but that it is now provided for —that his prayer has, in fact, a present relation to that Being to whom he prays. Nothing less than this will meet the requirement of his religious life. The question is, Can this requirement be met consistently with that stability of physical nature which is postulated by the doctrine of evolution—nay, consistently with the immutability of those decrees which are held to be binding by Christian theology itself?

Now it seems to us that the best answer to this question will be found by going direct to the explanation offered by Christianity. What are the elements which are involved in a Christian act of prayer? It is commonly thought that there are only two—a human suppliant and a Divine respondent. The truth is, that Christianity itself in the person of St Paul has declared this view to be inadequate. In addition to the human suppliant and the Divine respondent, he affirms that there is a third agent, and this the initiating agent of the whole process—a Divine prompter. The passage to which we refer in illustration of this position is Romans viii. 26, where the apostle says: "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmity: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." The meaning of this passage is frequently misunderstood. The

correct reading is not "infirmities," but "infirmity." The fact of the plural form having obtained currency has diverted our view from the main idea in the apostle's mind. He is speaking not of infirmities in general, but of a particular kind of infirmity —the infirmity of human ignorance as to what really is the will of God. In the preceding verses he has been telling his readers that they are saved not by sight but by hope—in other words, that they must take for granted much that lies before them in the future if they would not sink wearily by the way. In this 26th verse he tells them that by any light of their own they do not even know what they ought to ask of God in prayer. They have in their own strength no knowledge whether the thing which they desire is or is not consistent with the purpose of that Divine will which is the ultimate law of nature. This ignorance is in itself an infirmity; and if there were no other agency in prayer than a human petitioner and a Divine respondent, it would be fatal to the continuance of the prayerful spirit. But here Paul calls in the aid of a third agency—that of a Divine prompter. He tells us that besides the being who offers the petition, and the Being to whom the petition is offered, there is an agency antecedent to both—a Power which suggests to the human soul that which it *ought* to offer, that form of petition the offering up of which will not be a prayer for a

violation of the law of nature, or, which is the same thing, an infringement of the will of God,—"the Spirit itself helpeth our infirmity."

Here, then, is a very remarkable statement, and a singularly scientific statement. St Paul was as firm a believer in the immutability of the law of nature as any scientist of the nineteenth century. The difference between them lies purely in their language: what the modern scientist calls the law of nature, St Paul called the will of God. The will of God was to him a principle even more inviolable than the law of nature is to the scientist. The scientist can never say with absolute certainty that a time will never come when the present system of the universe will be replaced by other systems. But St Paul would have said with absolute certainty that a time could never come in which the eternal decrees of God should be either modified or repealed; the Divine will was for him an unchanging and an unchangeable law. Over against this conviction Paul, like the modern scientist, had to place the consciousness of human freedom. He had to account for the fact that man has the impulse to pray. He must either explain that fact consistently with his first position, or he must explain it away as an unreality and a delusion. He accepts it as a reality, and he professes to vindicate its consistency. He admits that the law of nature is unchangeable, or that the will of

God is inviolable, but he reminds his converts that they do not know what this law is as long as it exists in the future ; they can only know what it is when it manifests itself in the present. Prayer is that which reveals to them what the law of nature is—what the Divine will is. Prayer is itself a gift of the Spirit. The impulse to pray is a process of illumination or prophecy, a revelation to the heart beforehand of the purpose of God for them. They are not in the first instance asking of God—that is the second part of the process ; God is in the first instance prompting them what to ask, telling them through the excitement of an inward desire what it would be consistent with His pleasure to give.

It is clear that to a man holding such a view of prayer the unchangeableness of the law of nature, so far from being an objection, would be a stronghold. If a Christian believer should pray in the firm conviction that he will receive what he asks, this conviction must rest on the fact that the thing which he asks is a thing consistent with the will of God, or, in other words, bound up in the ultimate law of nature. To St Paul, therefore, the value of prayer lay not in the violability, but in the changelessness of the ultimate law. The impulse to efficacious prayer was itself a promise of God to the soul, and a promise of God to the soul was a revelation of the fact that the thing which was promised

was decreed by the will of God, was a part of the order of nature.

And this view will be confirmed by the reflection that the ultimate desire prescribed for all Christian prayer is the desire of harmony with the ultimate law, "not as I will, but as Thou wilt." "Teach us to pray," is the request made by the disciples to the Master on the very threshold of the Christian dispensation. The fact that the request is complied with is itself a strong corroboration of the view taken in the previous paragraph. It is assumed that the disciple is not able in his own strength to determine that which shall be consistent with the highest law of the universe, and therefore a form of prayer is put into his mouth expressive of those wants the gratification of which will be in unison with the plan of nature. In this form of prayer it is a highly significant circumstance that the suppliant is commanded to desire before all things the kingdom of God and its righteousness. Before offering up a petition even for his daily bread, he is enjoined to pray that the name of God may be hallowed, that the kingdom of God may come, and that the will of God may be done on earth as it is in heaven—an order which clearly shows that the limits of Christian prayer are ever circumscribed by the possibilities of existing law. The law of nature is here identical with the will of God, and to desire emancipation from the law of nature

is held equivalent to desiring a violation of the will of God. Accordingly, the suppliant is enjoined before all things to seek conformity with the Divine will, and to make the prayer for that conformity the basis of every subsequent petition. If he receives the promise of an answer to his prayer, that promise is ever conditioned on the previous attitude of his mind towards the law of the universe. Nowhere is this more strikingly seen than in the saying of the fourth Gospel, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." It would seem at first sight as if it were a promise of unlimited freedom in the range of prayer; it is in truth a circumscription of that range. The disciple is really told that if he enters into sympathy with the Divine will, he will not be able thenceforth to desire anything which is not already included in that will, that his desires shall from that day become limited to the possession of those things which it is the will of the Father that he should possess.

We have dwelt on this point at some length, because we believe it to be the point in which the Christian idea of prayer becomes reconcilable with the modern doctrine of evolution. The reconciliation is effected without the slightest strain, or the least necessity to twist the meaning of the facts of Christianity. So easily, in truth, do the facts of the Christian consciousness adapt themselves to the

modern order, that one is tempted to ask if that order be really modern, if that form of scientific difficulty which presents itself to the religious mind in our day had not its analogue and its equivalent in some system of the early Church. We have seen that, so far as the modern principle of continuity is concerned, it assuredly was so. That changelessness of nature which the scientist of the nineteenth century beholds in the doctrine of evolution, the Christian of the first century beheld in the Divine decrees. To the Christian of the first century the same philosophic obstacle presented itself as presents itself to the scientist of the nineteenth, and the same problem awaited the former as now falls to be solved by the latter. Therefore it is that the Christian idea of Divine communion lends itself so easily to the modern view of evolution; the apparent obstacle which it meets in evolution is identical with that apparent obstacle which it met in the Divine decrees.

It remains to ask whether the idea of Divine communion is less favoured by the modern, or evolutionary view of nature, than it was by the view of nature entertained by the older form of physical science. And here we must express our opinion that in this respect at least the modern doctrine of evolution has the advantage over its scientific predecessors. It seems to us that a man who has once accepted the principles of Christian

theism will find in the doctrine of evolution an illustration of the presence of God in the world, which he would have failed to find in the older conceptions of nature; and we shall endeavour, as briefly as possible, to set before the reader the grounds on which we have arrived at this opinion.

There have been two extreme views which the human mind has entertained of the nature of the outer world; they may be described repectively as the spiritualistic and the materialistic view. They have had their representatives in all ages. In India they were represented by the Vedanta and Sankhya systems, in Greece by the Platonic and Epicurean systems, in Medievalism by the Realist and Nominalist systems, in modern times by the systems of Idealism and Empiricism. Out of these we may select any pair of contrasts we choose, without respect to their historical order. Let us take, therefore, the system of the Platonist and the system of the eighteenth-century Empiricist. In these two poles, separated as they are by a vast interval of time, we shall see the contrast exhibited in its most marked and pronounced form, and shall thereby have the advantage of estimating the full strength of either tendency.

The Platonist sought communion with God by the attempt to destroy the influence of nature. He looked upon mind as the only reality, and on matter as a simple negation. To him the material

world was not so much evil as unreal; or rather, its evil to him consisted in the fact of its unreality. God was the most real Being in the universe, just because He was the most spiritual, which meant, to the Platonist, the most free from all material attributes. To commune with such a Being it was necessary that the soul should also be liberated from material conditions. If it would enter into union with God, it must consent to leave behind it all contemplation of the sights and sounds of nature, and must bury itself in a region of abstract thought, where the sights and sounds of nature cannot penetrate. Now the defect of this system consists in its violation of the very purpose which it is constructed to promote. Its aim is to secure an unqualified communion between the Divine life and the human soul; in reality, it ends by shutting out the Divine life from by far the larger part of human nature. It draws a line of demarcation between Divinity and temporal need. It regards man's secular wants—his hunger, thirst, physical privation, outward weariness, and the like—as barriers to the reception of the higher spiritual life, and it looks upon the completion of that life as something which can only be reached when the soul has emancipated itself from all mundane concerns. This is certainly to diminish and not to widen the natural avenues of religious communion.

At the extreme opposite remove from this view,

stands that tendency as whose representative we have taken the English empiricist of the last century. If the Platonist sought communion with God by destroying the influence of nature, the empiricist of the last century sought communion with nature by excluding the idea of God. He proposed to regard nothing as scientific which was not material in character, to accept no object of knowledge which did not enter the mind through one or other of the five senses. He did not, indeed, deny the existence of a transcendental Power; but then the transcendental meant to him the spatially high. He saw no Power *within* nature: nature was to him mechanical, not dynamical; it could only be influenced from without. That at certain periods of the far past it *had* been influenced from without, he felt bound to admit: the varieties of created species and the evidence of constructive design impelled him to the belief that there had been certain special occasions in which the transcendental Power of the universe had stooped from His transcendence to put forth a supernatural energy in the actual history of the world. But when once the empiricist had accounted for his variety of species, and explained by an original Divine act the appearances of design in nature, he did not trouble himself further to trace the subsequent movements of that creative Power. So far as he was concerned, it retired into the

background when once it had framed the universe and called into being the various orders of its life. He thought of the Creator as one whose work was done, or as one whose future work was only that of the spectator. He believed that He dwelt still in some vastly remote region, elevated indefinitely above the most distant star, and was willing to allow that there, perhaps, He continued to exercise a certain lordly control over the united masses of creation. But he never admitted that even this general control was a matter of science; he accepted it only as a matter of faith. The science which *he* acknowledged could tell him only of that which was intermediate between himself and the Creator—the world of physical law. He looked upon the laws of nature as the forms of existence that separated the being of man from the being of God. It never occurred to him that these laws of nature might themselves be that which bridged the gulf between the human and the Divine. He could think of his God as superintending nature, as regulating nature, as controlling nature; but the superintendence, regulation, and control were processes conducted from a height: the mechanism might be moved by God, but in itself it was a mechanism still, and as such it was an intermediate agency thrust between the human soul and the Being whom it essayed to worship.

Such was the tendency of that scientific spirit

which began to dominate the European intellect at the time of the Reformation, and reached its culminating force in the English and French empiricism of the eighteenth century. It was, as we have said, at the opposite remove from Platonism; but it is a familiar adage that extremes meet. These extremes certainly meet in their practical issue. The Platonism of the fifth century before Christ, and the empiricism of the eighteenth century after Christ, extremely opposed as they are in standpoint, have yet one idea in common. They both assume that there is an antithesis between the natural and the supernatural, that physical nature is in itself distinct from the life of the Divine. Alike in Platonism and in empiricism, the idea of nature is contemplated as a barrier to the idea of God, and the difference between them lies in the relative degree of importance which they assign to these ideas. The Platonist looks upon the idea of God as more useful to man than the idea of nature, and therefore he proposes to crucify the latter; the empiricist looks upon the idea of nature as more useful to man than the idea of God, and therefore he proposes to live only in the former. In either case, the thought of nature is regarded as something which has no natural connection with the thought of religion; and therefore, in both cases, the existence of the physical world is looked upon as a barrier to

man's cherishing the idea of communion with God.

Let us turn now to the modern doctrine of evolution as represented by Mr Herbert Spencer. Here we are introduced to a thought which is quite distinct in its nature either from Platonism or from the older scientific empiricism. In both of these systems the physical world was something which divided the life of the human soul from the presence of the creative Power. But in this modern system the physical world is brought before us in a new attitude—in the attitude of a medium *through* which the creative Power is present to the life of man. Nature here, instead of a barrier, becomes itself a revealer. In this new science, as represented by Mr Spencer, the transcendental no longer means the spatially high, but merely the intellectually inscrutable. There is an incomprehensible Force at the basis of all things—a Force whose nature is beyond the reach of human penetration. But it is not itself on that account outside the circle of nature, or separated from the life of man. Incomprehensible as it is, it is not uncomprehending. Incapable of being grasped by the human, it enfolds itself the human and all other things. It transcends physical nature, yet it dwells in that which it transcends—nay, is itself the cause of that which it transcends. Physical nature is one of its manifestations, as human life is another: neither of

them can exhaust its meaning, yet each of them expresses a phase of its being. And this transcendental Force is not only present in nature, it is omnipresent. It not merely lies at the basis of great phenomena, it is the cause of all phenomena. To its action are to be referred all the forms of nature, all the modes of vitality, all the phases of evolution which the universe exhibits. The distinction is annihilated between great and small, for the great and the small alike have their origin in a source which transcends experience.

The bearings of this view on the doctrine of Divine communion will be at once apparent. It is true, if there were no other God than the Force postulated by Mr Herbert Spencer, the very idea of religious communion would be a contradiction in terms. Mr Spencer will not allow that we have any right to call his Force a person, or to endow it with the attributes of consciousness; and where there is no conscious personality, there can be no communion with other personalities. But Mr Spencer himself will not affirm that the prohibition to endow his Force with personality has come from the doctrine of evolution: he tells us in effect expressly the contrary. He says that the doctrine of evolution has no testimony to give upon the subject; and it is just on the ground of its silence that he professes himself a religious agnostic. The silence of evolution speaks in two voices; if it does

not encourage hope, as little does it forbid faith. If the doctrine of evolution has nothing to say on the subject of the Divine personality, it would be highly unscientific in a theologian to claim its testimony as an ally. But on the other hand, it would be equally unscientific, in the face of this silence, to regard the doctrine of Divine personality as opposed by the doctrine of evolution. If there were an opposition between them, there would be no room for agnosticism. The very existence of a feeling of mystery, the very sense of intellectual ignorance which follows a survey of the facts of evolution, is itself a proof that these facts have still left open a door for the entrance of faith. Now if we once allow faith to enter that door—in other words, if we once assume that the Force of Mr Herbert Spencer is a conscious personality—all the rest of the way will be scientifically smooth and easy. The doctrine of evolution will not only not oppose our progress, it will become itself our ally and our friend. We shall thenceforth be able to hold the doctrine of a Divine communion not only on grounds of faith, but on principles of science. We shall no longer deem it unscientific to say that in God we live and move and have our being, for we shall recognise in this sentiment a translation of the Spenserian dictum that at the basis of all things lies the Power that is inscrutable. We shall no longer hold it

superstitious to affirm that there is a Spirit helping our infirmity, and telling us those things which we may ask consistently with nature's law, for we shall find that in point of fact our thoughts are being hourly prompted by the movement of a mysterious principle which underlies and manifests our lives. We shall no longer esteem it credulous to look beyond the operation of finite or material causes, for we shall learn as a verdict of science that the causes which men call finite and material are but the forebodings and manifestations of that great First Cause—the primal Force of the universe.

There is, then, a place in the doctrine of evolution for the existence of Divine communion. Let us suppose that the reality of this communion is conceded, what does it imply? It clearly involves much more than lies on the surface. If man can commune with God, it can only be by having the life of God, for the prerequisite of all communion is essential equality of nature. But if man has the life of God, he must have the immortality of God, for the distinction of the Divine life is its eternity. This brings us, therefore, to the final question between the science of the nineteenth century and the teaching of the old faith—What is the relation of that science to man's hope of a life beyond the grave? To the consideration of this subject we shall now advert.

CHAPTER XIII.

EVOLUTION AND IMMORTALITY.

IN the treatment of this subject we shall be obliged to have recourse to some repetition. We shall need to avail ourselves of some of those facts which have been adverted to in previous chapters, for there is such a close analogy between the Christian doctrine of immortality and the Christian doctrine of God, that the principles which elucidate the one serve also to illustrate the other. Let us at the outset remind the reader that, according to the doctrine of Mr Spencer, there *is* in the universe something which is immortal. That primal Force which, in his view, underlies all things, persists also through all things, is incapable of either increase or diminution, is absolutely unaffected by the successive changes of its own environment. This statement of Mr Spencer is more suggestive and more important than it might at first sight appear. It has been frequently asked, and commonly with an air of

despondency, whether the system of nature, as exhibited by the doctrine of evolution, offers any analogy that would lead to the hope of a life beyond the grave. If we believe Mr Herbert Spencer, it offers something more than an analogy; it presents us with a direct statement of fact. It tells us that the principle of immortality is already *in* the universe, that it does not need to be imported into it, that it exists now as a law of nature. It tells us that at the root of all changes there is something which is changeless, that at the back of all phenomena there is something which is permanent, that at the base of all evanescence there is something which is abiding. Nature, in the system of Mr Herbert Spencer, which is the most advanced phase of the system of evolution, presents us with the fact of an actually realised immortality.

Now the bearing of all this on the relation of the new creed of science to the old faith in immortality is very remarkable. In the view of the popular mind, there has been frequently drawn a sharp antithesis between the system of nature and the system of revelation, not altogether dissimilar to that which in the creeds of ancient Gnosticism separated the Demiurgus who made the world from the God who ruled in heaven. Nowhere has this imaginary antithesis been more sharply marked than in the relative attitudes

which nature and revelation are held to occupy towards the belief in a future state. Man's hope in immortality has been held to consist in his belief that the course of natural law has been interrupted. The supernatural has been looked upon as the equivalent for the *un*natural, and the dispensation of Divine grace as the abolition of the order of nature. Christianity, in proclaiming the doctrine of immortal life, has been received rather as an anomaly than as a light. The office of a light is to illuminate things already existing; the Christian doctrine of immortality has been supposed to *destroy* the things already existing. It has been taken for granted that within the system of physical science there is no place for the doctrine of a future life; and while the man of science has been suffered at his pleasure to hold that belief, he has only been allowed to do so on the ground of the Baconian principle that there is a separation between matters of science and matters of faith.

But now, for the first time, we are presented with a view of nature which, in relation to the doctrine of immortality, offers us something higher than a mere attitude of indifference towards the old faith. The modern doctrine of evolution is professedly built on the lines of the Baconian principle, and therefore it has pursued the method of science without reference to the conclusions of

faith. All the more remarkable is the fact that in relation to the belief in immortality the modern doctrine of evolution *has* found that meeting-place with revelation for which its predecessors have looked in vain. If we believe Mr Spencer, we shall be led to the conclusion that the existence of immortality in the universe is not a novelty, and therefore not a break in the chain. Mr Spencer tells us that the principle of immortality, so far from being a new thing in the world, is in point of fact the oldest thing in the universe—the thing which lies at the basis of all other things. It is something which belongs to the being of that primal Force which comprehends all nature, while itself uncomprehended by nature. The only thing we do comprehend about that Force is just the fact of its persistence, of its pertinacity through all changes,—in a word, of its immortality. But if it be so, it follows that the introduction of immortality into any special region of the universe would never break the evolutionary chain. It would not be a leap or paroxysm above the original order of nature, but only a manifestation in the circumference of what already exists in the centre. Very significantly, therefore, is it stated in the Book of Genesis that the immortal life which was breathed into man was not a new life, but one which had existed in the universe from the beginning—the breath of God. He is said to

have become a living soul, not by a leap or paroxysm which broke the evolutionary chain, but by the impartation of something which, according to Mr Spencer, is the prime mover of the chain of evolution—the persistence of a Force lying at the basis of the universe: "God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life."

Thus far, then, we are presented by the system of evolution with something which is more than an analogy to the immortality of the soul; we are presented with an actual revelation of the fact that there is in nature a thing which is already immortal. Can the doctrine of evolution go any further in corroboration of the hope of immortality? The immortality of force is chiefly valuable in showing us that the idea of an eternal persistence is not a thought contrary to science. But if the matter ended there, we should, after all, have attained a very small result indeed. If force be no more than force, if it contains no other attribute than that of abstract and unconscious power, the immortality revealed by nature will be of little use or comfort to the human soul. To know that no force in the universe has ever been lost, to ascertain that no atom in nature has ever perished, to prove that no diminution in the quantity of being has ever taken place, may be a satisfactory computation to the arithmetician, but can be of no value to him who inquires after the immortality of the soul. The

immortality of the soul is not a persistence of quantity, not a continuance in the measure of force, not a mere absence of diminution in the sum of figures; it is a continuity of quality, a prolonging of consciousness, a persistence of something which can at no time be weighed or measured. If, therefore, we would have from science any light on this subject, we must seek it elsewhere than in the mere contemplation of force. The persistence of force is only valuable to the doctrine of immortality in proving that the conception of immortality is not alien to nature. We want to know whether nature can go further, whether it can tell us of anything which is immortal besides force: if so, we shall conclude that this other thing is itself one of the attributes of force.

And here, again, we would direct the mind of the reader to a fact to which we have already alluded in another connection. In speaking of the idea of God, we pointed out that unless we suppose a violation in the present order of physical science—in other words, unless we postulate the belief in a miracle compared to which the miracles of revelation are mild—we shall be compelled to admit the truth that life has never had a beginning. The present order of physical nature is the law of biogenesis—the law that no living thing can proceed from a thing which is not living. Unless we believe that at one time that law was violated by an

act of spontaneous generation, we shall have no alternative but to confess that life has been eternal. If every living object presupposes a living object before it from which it has derived its being, it is impossible to imagine a time in which no living object existed. We saw that two alternatives lay open to us as possible hypotheses. We pointed out that in the first instance it was competent for us to hold, either that there had been an eternal series of offspring and parents, or that the series had begun somewhere by the impartation of life from a higher source. In either case, we showed that the result was the same; whichever of the hypotheses we adopted, was found equally to involve the eternity of life. Ultimately we saw that it was only in the first instance that we had an alternative at all. We found that the hypothesis of an eternal series of offspring and parents was untenable in the nature of things, and that, as a matter of scientific fact, we were driven to the conclusion that life in this world *had* a beginning. We were forced, then, to adopt the only remaining alternative—the supposition that life in this world had begun through the impartation of life from a higher order of things, or, as we should say in religious language, from the breath of God.

Now this fact, which was then used in its bearing on the idea of God, has an equal significance in relation to the doctrine of immortality. For if it

be proved that life has been already eternal, we have already proved, not indeed the immortality of the soul, but the immortality of that which makes the soul. If life has had no beginning in time, this is only, in other words, to say that life is already immortal, that it has already proved its capacity to live for ever. Here is another step gained from the testimony of physical evolution. Nature has presented us with a second fact which presents more than an analogy to the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, which tells us that the material of which the soul professes to be constituted has itself exhibited in history the power of an endless being. Two things, accordingly, are revealed by the present system of evolution to have been eternal—force and life. We are now prepared to say that these two are one. We have seen that in this world life *had* a beginning, and it follows that the life from which it came must have been supramundane, or above this world. The only form of being which evolution knows to be above this world is Mr Spencer's inscrutable Force: we are justified, therefore, in concluding that the supramundane life which generated all other life belongs itself to the nature of that inscrutable Force, and derives its immortality from the same source which constitutes *its* persistence.

Have we, then, solved the question of the soul's immortality? By no means. We have seen that

there is a principle of immortality in the universe, and we have seen that this principle is a principle of life—that there is a persistent force, and that this force is alive. These, we think, are legitimate conclusions from the law of evolution as we now behold it. Yet this does not amount to a doctrine of individual immortality. What is that which has been proved to be immortal? It is only generic life, life in the mass, the collective life of the universe. What is proved is the fact that there has been no cessation in the flowing of the general stream of vitality. But an individual immortality has to do not with the stream but with the drops. The immortality of force as a whole, and the immortality of life as a whole, are certainly highly suggestive facts; they imply that even in the plant-world and in the animal world there is an immortal something, an element which is not destroyed by death. But that is a very different thing from saying that the forms of plant-life and the forms of animal life are themselves immortal. So far as we have yet gone, we have found no trace of such an immortality; all that we have reached is the proof that there is in the world something which has revealed its capacity for infinite survival, and that this something is of the nature of life.

Now if this persistent, living force had intrenched itself in the centre of each individual's being, there would have been no such thing in

the universe as the fact of death; it would have quickened each individual form with its own persistence. Instead of that, the living force of the universe has not intrenched itself in the centre of any individual's being, and the result is, that every separate form of life—alike in the plant, the animal, and the man—is subject to death. The Book of Genesis says that man had the chance of attaining to a contrary experience—the chance, that is to say, of having the persistent force of the universe embodied in the centre of his being. The truth of that assertion the doctrine of evolution can neither affirm nor deny; it lies beyond the range of evolution. But the doctrine of evolution can affirm that the doctrine of Genesis is *theoretically* true, that the indwelling of the persistent force within the centre of man's personality would, as a matter of fact, have exempted him from the common law of mortality—would have made him immortal, not only in the sense of being able to survive death, but in the sense of being able to refuse to die.

There is now, however, no instance in the individual forms of nature, of any special manifestation of life being in the absolute sense immortal—that is to say, there is no instance of immortality in the sense of freedom from individual death. Yet it does not follow that the individual life is excluded from immortality in the wider sense. We may regard death as the inevitable lot of all indi-

vidual forms, and still continue to believe in a reconstruction of the individual form subsequent to death—in other words, we may believe that the individual immortality which has been lost as a *right* may be given back as a *gift*. This is, indeed, the precise doctrine of the old faith in relation to the immortality of man. If man had received the persistent force into the centre of his individual being, his individual being would have been immortal in the absolute sense; it would have been exempt from death. But although he has not received the persistent force into the centre of his individual being, there still remains to him a hope that he may inherit immortality as a future gift of God; and that hope is converted into a certainty by the indwelling in the second Adam of the primal Power of the universe.

What is the relation of modern science to this doctrine of the old faith? Is it favourable, is it adverse, is it indifferent? Each of these positions has at different times been taken, and the natural conclusion is, that science may seem to exhibit one or other of them, according to the angle from which it is received. We shall, in the first instance, endeavour to inquire whether there be in the scientific system of nature anything which, either by way of fact or analogy, supports the doctrine of the old faith; and we shall afterwards consider whether in the system of evolution there be any

facts or analogies which seem to point in an opposite or counterbalancing direction, and whether these admit of an explanation consistent with the analogies of the old faith.

First, then, let us ask if the present scientific system of nature presents us with any fact or any analogy corroborative of the position that the reconstruction of an individual life subsequent to the fact of death is a possibility. One very important question lies on the threshold—Is death annihilation? We are not asking whether death be the annihilation of the individual *life;* that is not a question on the threshold, but the question itself under consideration. What we say is, that there is a preliminary inquiry—whether the materials which before death constituted the life of the individual, are dissolved by the fact of death: if so, then reconstruction is a contradiction in terms, and so is resurrection; the only possibility would be re-creation, which is something very different from immortality. But so far as this preliminary question is concerned, the facts of nature come to our aid most thoroughly. We may state with perfect confidence that the materials which constituted the individual life before death are still in existence after death. This is involved in the evolutionary doctrine of the persistence of force, besides being partially verifiable by actual experiment. The doctrine of the conservation of forces

is the doctrine of the immortality of forces—the doctrine that when a physical form is disintegrated, the forces which existed within it remain undiminished in quantity. When the flame of the candle is extinguished, it is only put out in an etymological sense; it is put out of the *candle*, but its energy lives elsewhere.

Now what is the bearing of this on the subject in hand? It is this. If we could once admit that there is *now* a vital force in the individual man, the existence of that vital force hereafter would be as demonstrable as any proposition of Euclid. If all the materials which constitute an individual life continue to exist somewhere after the seeming disintegration of that life, then, conceding a vital spark to be one of these materials, it would follow irresistibly that this vital spark was not extinguished by death. The truth is, that paradoxical as it may seem, the scientific difficulty here does not lie in the fact of death, nor in the inability to conceive a state beyond death; it lies entirely in a dispute concerning the state on *this* side of the grave. Admit that man has *now* a special force called vitality, and so far as mere future existence is concerned, the difficulties of the theologian would be over; the modern scientific doctrine of the correlation of forces would itself demand for him all the immortality he desires. But where the scientific doctrine fails to produce demonstration is in the

existence of a debatable land, not beyond the grave, but in the human consciousness. The modern agnostic is quite well aware that if you grant the present existence of a special force called vitality, you have, on the principle of modern science, granted the survival of that force after death. But the scepticism of the modern agnostic centres in the present. He doubts whether there be a special force called vitality. He asks us if we have any evidence that what we call life is anything more than a very subtle property of those material particles which constitute, when united, what we term the bodily organism. Here, then, is a second question arising out of the first. The answer to the first question is hypothetically in favour of immortality: it says that if there be now within us a special thing called life, we shall be bound on scientific principles to assume its immortality. But the second question is, *Is* there a special thing called life? Of course this is a matter that cannot be tested by direct observation. The existence of the observer is itself the thing to be proved, and that can only be proved by inference. No man can see life in itself; he can only see its manifestations, and the simple question is, What do these manifestations teach? Under these circumstances it will be better to drop altogether the abstract language of the schools, and to confine ourselves purely to the popular language of fact and pheno-

mena. Instead of asking whether there be a special force called vitality, let us simply put the question whether there be in the nature of man anything which cannot be explained or accounted for merely as a property of those material particles which at present constitute the bodily organism. By this means we shall avoid all speculative ground, and have the advantage of planting our feet on a basis which science itself shall admit to be firm.

Is there, then, any position from which the man of science and the theologian shall be content to take their start together? Is there any fact in the mental constitution of man which will without hesitation be admitted by both? There is; they both admit that man has a consciousness of personal identity. It is true that immediately after making this common admission they may diverge wide as the poles. They may differ, on the one hand, as to the source of this consciousness; and, on the other, as to the reality of the fact which it testifies. The man of science may say that the sense of personal identity is itself a property of the material particles; or he may deny that, in point of fact, there is any identity in the human organism. We will return to these objections presently. In the meantime, we have simply to take notice of the fact that there is one point on which there is no divergence of opinion, and that is the conviction that man does possess a sense of personal identity.

The thing to be accounted for, alike by the theologian and by the scientist, is not the fact of identity, but the belief in it. We stated formerly, in speaking of the dispute as to the reality of human freedom, that the question of its reality was to the philosopher irrelevant—that the thing to be accounted for by the philosopher was not the existtence of freedom, but the existence of the *sense* of freedom, of the belief that we are free. Precisely analogous to this is the case before us: we have to account for the fact that man feels himself to be the same being during a long succession of years; and we have to account for it equally, whether it be deemed the perception of an outward reality or the experience of a subjective delusion.

We have said that the man of science may, after accepting this fact, proceed to draw from it two conclusions; he may declare that the sense of personal identity is a property of the united material particles, and he may declare that it does not describe any reality in the state of the organism. Now, strange to say, the last assertion is emphatically true, and it is by the proof of the last that we are best able to disprove the first. Paradoxical as it may seem, the sense of personal identity is an anomaly in nature, and is at variance with every phenomenon of nature. A man believes himself to be the same person to-day that he was twenty years ago. The question is, Why? What does he

mean by *himself?* Does he mean that outward organism which he calls his body? If so, his sense of personal identity exists in opposition to the facts. There was not a particle of this body in existence twenty years ago; the organism which he now possesses is not the organism which he possessed then. He has, in point of fact, passed through an actual process of disintegration and reconstruction; he has been unclothed and clothed upon. The process of unclothing takes place several times in the course of a human life—some say every seven years. At the end of that period there is probably not a vestige remaining of the old tabernacle in which the life then dwelt; the elements of the first body have passed away, and they have been replaced by other elements assimilated from surrounding nature. But the strange thing is, that in the midst of this complete transmutation, this virtual death, there should remain an unbroken sense of identity. If the material organism be the man, why should the man continue to feel himself unchanged after every particle of the material organism has been dismembered? Is not the very existence of this sense of identity a proof that the material organism is not the man, an evidence that there is something more in human nature than those particles of matter and those physical manifestations of force which have passed away and left the consciousness of identity behind?

Surely it can only have been left behind because there was something in the man not included in the transmutation—something which was not capable of being disintegrated with the particles of matter, and which, because it was incapable of disintegration, was able to preserve unbroken a sense of the changeless amid the mutable.

Now it has always seemed to us that the phenomenon here described is the nearest analogy which human consciousness presents to the persistence of force in nature. We have seen that, according to Mr Spencer, there is a force at the basis of the universe which persists unchanged amid all the changes of its manifestations. Here, within the circle of human consciousness, is a state of things precisely analogous, if not absolutely identical. We see an organism whose material constituents are in a constant state of flux, whose elements are every moment undergoing some form of modification, until at last there remains not one part of the original structure. Yet amidst all this flux there is something which remains permanent—the consciousness of identity itself. How are we to account for this? Shall we account for it by the general doctrine of the persistence of the primal force? It is both natural and reasonable to do so. But let us remember that in doing so we can no longer look upon the primal force as a mere abstract power; we shall be compelled henceforth to

regard it as a conscious power. That which persists here is not an abstraction; it is a *consciousness*. The value of the persistence in this sphere consists in the fact that it is a persistence of personality. That which continues is a sense or consciousness of identity; and as the identity does not lie in the material environment, it must consist in something which is over and above that environment. The doctrine of the persistence of force has thus proved itself an ally of the doctrine of immortality.

But if the doctrine of immortality has a relation to the doctrine of the persistence of force, it has, it seems to us, a still more pronounced relation to that other doctrine of Mr Herbert Spencer—the inscrutability of force. Persistence and inscrutability are the two known attributes of Mr Spencer's deity. The former, as we have seen, favours the faith in immortality; let us see what the latter says. We have already shown, in a previous chapter, that agnosticism is not ignorance, but only the sense of ignorance. To know that we know nothing, is already to have reached a fact of knowledge. When a man says with Mr Herbert Spencer that the Power which rules the universe is inscrutable to him, he is not merely saying that he knows nothing about it. He is making a positive and not a negative statement; he is declaring that the Power which rules the universe has awakened

within him a sense of mystery—has caused him to become conscious of a barrier to his own consciousness. To use a former illustration—the recognition of a barred gate in the world of intellect is itself a recognition of the fact that we are too large for our environment. The very ability to perceive our imprisonment is a proof that imprisonment is not the natural state of our being—in other words, that there is something within us which already transcends the present limits of our nature. How do we know that there is a Power in the universe which is inscrutable to us? We can only know that fact by being ourselves, to some extent and in some phase of our being, sharers in the same force which constitutes the life of that Power. If man had wanted the sense of sight, he would not only have been ignorant of its existence, but he would have been ignorant of his own ignorance. If man had wanted the sense of God, he would not only have been unaware of the manner of His existence, but he would have been unaware that he himself experienced in this matter any intellectual difficulty. To feel that the primal force of the universe is inscrutable, is to be conscious of our own ignorance,—that is to say, it is to be one step removed from absolute ignorance; it is to know something of God. To know something of God is to have something of God in us. The life which perceives its human limitation has already in some

sense surmounted its limits; and it can only have surmounted its limits by having received into some phase of its being a portion of that illimitable force whose presence has created within it a vision of the inscrutable.

There is, then, some reason to believe that man is to some extent a sharer in the essential nature of the great primal Power. His recognition of that Power's inscrutability is itself an indication that in a certain measure he is possessed of its own force. But the force of that primal Power is persistent—in other words, immortal. If man, therefore, has in him any portion of its being, he has in him to that extent a measure of immortality. If the life by which he perceives his own finitude must itself be an infinite life, it must itself, for the same reason, be an immortal life. The immortality which man does not possess in the centre of his individual being, must still linger in some sphere of the circumference, or at least there must linger a receptivity which shall render possible the impartation of immortality as a gift of God. It would seem, also, that so far as immortality is concerned, the gift is to be a universal one. The reason for this assertion is, that the perception of inscrutability is universal. If the sense of mystery be the beginning of the sense of God, the sense of God must be universal to man. A man does not escape it by calling himself an agnostic. Agnosticism is

itself the culmination of the sense of mystery, and therefore the highest form of the rudimentary sense of God. Agnosticism, alien as it professes to be to the spirit of religion, is yet rooted and grounded in the same principle which has ever given birth to the spirit of religion—the sense of mystery, the vision of the inscrutable in nature. The sense of God, therefore, is universal; and that which it involves must be universal too—the receptivity of human nature for the indwelling of a force which is persistent and eternal.

Thus far, then, the modern scientific view of the system of nature is in favour of the doctrine of immortality. It is alleged, however, that the doctrine of evolution presents us with one or two facts on the other side; and as no statement of a case can be scientific which does not take account of all the facts, it will now be incumbent on us to consider the points in which the evolutionary system is supposed to militate against the belief in man's future existence.

The first of these may be called the objection derived from the analogy between the life of the man and the life of the animal. That there is such an analogy is presupposed and demanded by the system of evolution itself. That system implies that all parts of creation are somewhere linked to one another, and that, therefore, the life of the man must be joined somewhere to the

animal life. But if it be so, it is asked, what is man's claim to a distinction of superiority over the beast so pronounced as the possession of immortality? If the beast of the field be mortal, why should that life of man which is derived from it be immortal? Is there any analogy between a form of life that lives for ever and a form of life that perishes within a few years? and if there be no analogy between them, with what logical consistency can it be affirmed that the one has produced the other? Is not the doctrine of evolution at variance with the possibility of any such supposition? Is it not bound, on its own premisses, to deny that a life which, by nature and in fact, is perishable, can have given birth to a life which contains the susceptibility of an endless duration?

But here, as in so many other cases, there exists a confusion of thought as to what *are* the premisses of the doctrine of evolution. It is assumed that, according to the doctrine of evolution, the life of the man is derived from the life of the animal. If we take the system of Mr Herbert Spencer as the representative of this doctrine, we shall rather be disposed to state the formula thus: the life of the man is derived *through* the life of the animal. In the system of Mr Spencer, the being of man, like the being of everything else on the globe, has a double origin; it has an origin in the earth, and it has an origin in that which transcends the earth.

Man is indeed the product of evolution, but he is not the product of a single factor of the process. He derives something from the lives and the elements which have preceded him; he is indebted to the principle of heredity for that part of his being which connects him with the lower creation. But he claims to have a part of his being which is not derived from beneath—that part which suggests to him the receptivity of his nature for immortal life. There is no necessity incumbent on man to deny that this higher phase of his being is, like the lower, the product of evolution; what he denies is, that it is the product of the same *factor* as the lower. Knowing, as he does, that the prime agent in the process is just the great inscrutable force itself, he is not startled to find in his own nature some indications that this force has been at work as well as the principle of heredity. When he finds in his nature certain facts and analogies which suggest to him the hope of immortality, his hope will not be converted into despair by remembering that he is the creature of evolution, for he knows that one side of the process of evolution is ever a Divine side—the working of that inscrutable force which persists throughout the universe. He knows that if he shall receive the gift of immortality, he shall receive it only through the impartation of that persistent nature which dwells in the great inscrutable Power.

There is, then, nothing in the doctrine of evolution which prevents man from holding that he possesses an immortal life unshared by the beast of the field. Neither, let us add, is there anything in the doctrine of evolution which would prevent him from holding that the gift of immortality which he has been promised will be bestowed also on the lower creatures. What we mean is, that so far as *evolution* is concerned, a man might scientifically hold either one or the other of these positions. The inscrutable force of the universe is not absent from the life of the animal any more than from the life of the man; and if any Christian theologian should, like Bishop Butler,[1] deem it consistent with his theology to cherish a hope for the immortality of the former, he will meet with no opposition from the evolution principle. The opposition he will meet with, apart from his own special studies, will be derived mainly from the facts of human consciousness, or, to speak more correctly, from the presence of certain facts in human consciousness which, so far as observation can extend, appear to be absent from the life of the lower creation. An inquiry into this matter does not fall within our present province; our purpose is sufficiently satisfied when it is shown that the existence of a link of continuity between the

[1] Analogy, part i., chap. i., Oxford edition of his works, 1849, p. 17.

animal and the man does not denude the man of his hope of immortality.

There is, however, another phase of the order of nature in which man appears to be linked to the world of earthly elements more firmly and decidedly: we allude to the sphere of embryology. In the former case we had only to do with man as a race; here we are concerned with man as an individual. There are some who hold the doctrine of evolution in the interest of materialism, and who labour to expound it as a process by which the higher grows out of the lower. To such the sphere of embryology seems to offer a support and to present a confirmation. They point us to the fact that at the beginning the germ-cell of human life is just the same as any other cell, quite indistinguishable from that of either the animal or the plant. They refer us to the further fact, that in the process of its maturation the human fœtus passes through a series of progressive gradations, in which the nucleus of its organisation is first formed, and then by successive stages developed. They go on to tell us that these gradations are simply repetitions of the stages of animal life—that the human fœtus in its progress towards perfection becomes successively a fish, a reptile, and a bird, and arrives at its state as man only by developing its nature as an animal. The inference intended to be drawn is, that all life is

the result of material conditions, and is proportionate to the growth of these conditions. The original insignificance of the germ-cell, lifted as it is so little above non-existence, is taken as a proof that we can trace back the beginnings of life almost to a material origin; while the similarity of the course pursued by the human fœtus to the course traversed by its predecessors, is regarded as an infallible testimony that the life of the man and the life of the animal are one. We are asked, finally, to take the case of the individual human fœtus as an analogy to that universal process by which the life of the world at large began and was developed,—to look upon the small beginnings of the one only as a specimen of the insignificant origin of the other, and to see in the progress of the unit from the lower to the higher an indication in miniature of that process by which the principle of universal life has attained its present perfection.

Now, so far as this question refers to the relation of the animal to the man, we have already disposed of it, and need not reopen the subject. We have only here to do with it in so far as it concerns the relation of life in general to that which is not living. The doctrine of embryology is thought by the men of this school to favour the notion that the fœtus is developed through purely material conditions, and that it reaches the human state by an ascent from a form of life so low as to be hardly distin-

guishable from non-living matter. We are then asked to take the human fœtus as a miniature specimen of the development of life in general, and to conclude that this, too, is an ascent from the lower to the higher. The result of this process, if pushed to its logical issue, would be the ultimate derivation of life from matter—and therefore the virtual denial of the possibility of an existence beyond death. But is the premiss on which the reasoning is based a sound one? We are not asking whether the facts be true. They are by no means all of them universally admitted; many regard the gradations of the fœtus through the fish, the reptile, and the bird as an extremely fanciful hypothesis. But we intend to assume here that all the facts are true. We intend, further, to take the materialist at his word, and to accept the development of the human fœtus as a specimen of the mode in which universal life develops. If the materialist will only abide by the analogy of the individual fœtus, he will be driven logically out of his materialism. For what are the lessons of embryology? *Is* the life of the individual fœtus an ascent from the lower to the higher? Yes; but only after it has first been a descent from the higher to the lower. Say that the human fœtus was at one time a bird, at a more remote period a reptile, further back still a fish, and finally, at its beginning, a germ-cell; does this prove that

the absolute law of evolution is a gradation from the lower to the higher? Not so; for in truth the beginning of this life as a fœtus was not its beginning as a life. If it was once a bird, a reptile, and a fish, it was something else before it was any of these; it was a portion of the life of man. If, as a fœtus, it has ascended from the lowest grade, it has first descended in order to become a fœtus. Its rise to the level of the human is not really a rise; it is simply a resumption of that which was its original rank, and from which it has temporarily descended. If the child, when it reaches the period of consciousness, exhibits the traces of an animal heredity, it exhibits also the traces of a heredity which is not animal, of a parentage which is earlier than the animal, and lies behind the stages of fœtal development; it is because its ultimate derivation is from a human source that its most marked characteristic is the possession of a human nature.

The conclusion, then, from the doctrine of embryology, is, that the evolution of human life in the individual is a twofold process; that it is first a descent from a higher stage to a lower, and then an ascent from that lower stage back to the level from which it came. Now if we transfer this analogy to the evolution of life in the world at large, we shall find that it has brought us to a view of things which, while perfectly in accordance with theism, is not incompatible with the doctrine

of Mr Spencer. The evolution of life in the world exhibits, in the first instance, a gradation from the lower to the higher. The geological record tells us that the earthly course of the stream of life is shallow at its beginning, and wider as it flows. Each period exhibits an increased fulness of being, each stage reveals a new order of vital development. But then the geological record cannot give, and does not profess to give, the real beginning of the process. The real beginning of the process, in the view of Mr Herbert Spencer, lies in a manifestation of the inscrutable force of the universe; in the view of the theist, it lies in an impartation of the life of God. These two doctrines in this respect are one; they both distinctly imply that the original course of life was a descent from the higher to the lower. Alike in the system of the theist and in the system of Mr Spencer, the series of changes which we designate by the name of life derives its origin from a source which transcends perception. It is implied, as we have seen, in the doctrine of biogenesis itself, that if the present law of physical nature has possessed that immutability which we generally claim for law, life could have had no beginning. It follows that its earthly beginnings are not its source, and that its original value cannot be measured by its first manifestations in the system of evolution. In the system of evolution, it is but a fœtus developing by slow

stages towards perfection; and, like the individual fœtus, it is to all appearance only striving to regain a level of being from which it has been forced to descend.

Thus far, then, we find nothing in the system of nature which contradicts man's primitive hope of immortality. Neither in the existence of the links which are supposed to bind the man to the animal, nor in that law of embryology which is supposed to trace his origin from elements which he possesses in common with the dust of the ground, is there to be found any corroboration of the sentiment that the doctrine of evolution is opposed to the doctrine of immortality. There is, however, in connection with this question of embryology, another fact which has been thought to militate against the primitive belief. It is well known that in the process of procreation there is a parsimony in the use of materials. Out of many seeds the many are rejected, and the choice generally falls upon the one. There is, in truth, a system of election in nature—a system in which one seed is singled out from all its compeers, and selected to carry on alone the further development of that order into which it has come. And this has been supposed to indicate a waste of being. It has been thought that the rejection of so many seeds of incipient life is a proof that life is not an object of care to nature. It has been supposed, in fact, to point

to an actual waste of vital being as the law on which the process of evolution moves; and it is asked whether, in the light of such a law, we can still adhere to the conclusion that there is no incompatibility between the doctrine of evolution and the doctrine of immortality.

But is there a proof here of the actual waste of being? There is, as we have said, the evidence of a system of election—and in this the doctrine of evolution is in harmony with the whole course of human history. But election is not a waste of being; it is simply the choosing of certain seeds for a particular purpose, and the leaving of the others unemployed for this purpose. We are not warranted to conclude more from the procreative system of nature than that the being of the remaining seeds has not been appropriated in a particular direction; it has been left out of account in the achievement of a certain end, but it does not therefore follow that it has been wasted. On the contrary, the doctrine of the persistence of force seems to prove conclusively that nothing has been wasted. If the doctrine of the persistence of force be true, it follows that there has been no diminution in the sum of universal being, that every atom which ever existed within the universe exists within it still, that every force which ever operated in nature continues in some form to operate in nature still. If it be so, there can be no waste of generic being,

and in the case of these incipient seeds the generic being is the only thing worth preserving. There is no individuality sufficiently strong to be deplored in its loss; the valuable element is just that incipient life which may develop into other individual forms, and which we have every reason to believe does, after the disintegration of the seed, really so develop. If the failure of any seed to carry on the present purpose of nature be a proof of the waste of being, we shall be bound to conclude that there is a waste of *universal* being; for, so far as the present system of nature is concerned, every seed ultimately fails and dies. Man's hope of immortality is not derived from the persistence of the individual seeds of being in the present order of things; it is derived from his belief that the present order of things is not the final order, and that beyond the purpose of physical nature there is a purpose which shapes the destiny of universal life.

And this leads us to another aspect in which the doctrine of evolution has seemed to interpose a barrier to the doctrine of immortality. It is an aspect which is in some respects the exact converse of the previous view. In the previous view the destruction of individual seeds is supposed to be a waste of being; in the view which we are now about to consider, the waste consists in the temporary preservation of these seeds. The aim of the system of evolution is held to be the annihi-

lation of the individual. More and more as the drama of life develops, is it said to be revealed that man is but the fragment of a mighty whole. The nothingness of the individual is declared to be a truth that grows in prominence in proportion to the advance of scientific knowledge, and the duty of man is said to be to yield up his own petty life to the great life of the universe. This is the origin of that doctrine which in modern times has become increasingly popular,—that the only future state which man ought to look for is the state called corporate immortality—the state in which the individual loses his individuality, and is submerged in the life of the whole. He himself as a personal being will not live, but his influence shall. He shall live in the hearts of those whom he has left behind, shall live in the lives he has inspired, in the memories he has endeared, in the imaginations he has kindled, in the thoughts he has stimulated. This, we are told, is a far nobler view of immortality than the search for an individual future, a view which lifts the mind out of its own selfishness, and ushers it into the glorious liberty of the life that has ceased to regard itself. In reaching this belief, we have reached the highest motive to philanthropy, the purest stimulus to duty, the loftiest incentive to benevolence, and the most imperishable source of personal blessedness.

Now we admit that the doctrine of evolution

has increasingly revealed the organic unity of the universe, has increasingly brought to view the fact that the individual man is only a fragment of the whole. We admit, moreover, that it is the duty of the individual man above all things to realise this fact, to lose sight of his own individuality in the recognition of that great corporate community of which he forms but a single member. We hold, further, that the inculcation of this duty has been the special glory of Christianity considered as a moral system, that it was the religion of Christ and not the philosophy of Auguste Comte which first said, "He that loveth his life shall lose it." In that aphorism Christianity itself declared that exclusive individual contemplation constituted a waste of being. Yet, strange to say, it is just here that Christianity has vindicated the claims of the individual. Why does it hold that exclusive self-contemplation is a waste of being? Simply because it holds that exclusive self-contemplation is a weakening of the *individual*, that the love of life is the loss of life. Christianity, like Comtism, would teach men to contemplate the welfare of that universal body of which each is but a member, but it would teach them that lesson by a precisely opposite method. Comtism would say that the doctrine of individual immortality must be sacrificed that a man may cease to live for himself; Christianity says, on the other hand, that it is only by ceasing

to live for himself that a man can ever realise the strength of his own personality and the ground of his own immortal hope. And experience has amply verified this Christian doctrine. All life has proved, all consciousness has testified, that the individual only really begins to live when he lives in the race. It is in the recognition of the truth of our membership in a corporate body that each of us rises into a sense of personal dignity, into a perception of individual power. As long as the life feels itself to be a unit separated from other lives, it must inevitably feel itself to be personally weak and insignificant; its personal strength only comes when its enthusiasm comes, and its enthusiasm only comes when it is lifted out of itself. On this ground also, therefore, we hold that the doctrine of evolution has rendered service to the doctrine of immortality. In opening up to man a view of his individual fragmentariness, it has revealed to him the best method in which his fragmentariness can be redeemed. In teaching him to lose sight of himself, it has caused him to find himself; in awakening him to the interests of that mighty whole of which his life forms a part, it has given to that life itself a strength which it knew not before.

We have now reviewed the main points in which the modern doctrine of evolution seems to come into contact with man's primitive hope of immor-

tality. It will be manifest that, when all has been said, it is only the fringe of the subject that has really been touched, that really *can* be touched, by the doctrine of evolution. There are a multitude of questions remaining behind to which that doctrine can give no answer, either affirmative or negative. What is the nature of the soul's future? what is to be the mode of the soul's existence? what is the prospective region of the soul's habitation? How many are they whose immortality shall be an immortality of Divine fulness? These are questions which in all ages have pressed for an answer, but which can receive no possible answer from the system of evolution. It is not possible that a system which is expressly concerned with the laws of time shall be able to throw light upon a state which transcends time. We must be content, therefore, to take from the doctrine of evolution that which it lies within its province to give, and to leave to the researches of the theologian the questions whose solution is beyond the range of science.

One thing, indeed, we may say. The system of nature agrees with the system of revelation in presenting us with two different modes of estimating the value of life. In the field of science and in the field of revelation alike, we have two measurements of life—a measurement according to its duration, and a measurement according to its intensity.

There are lives which last longer than others, and there are lives which, without reference to the period of their lasting, are fuller than others, more rich in the present amount of their being. These distinctions, which we meet on the very face of nature, have been taken up and strongly emphasised by the page of revelation. It cannot be denied that the Bible recognises a twofold immortality—an immortality which consists in the uninterrupted duration of years, and an immortality which is constituted by the fulness of present life. In the one case it measures existence by its length, in the other it measures it by its largeness. The first of these immortalities it seems to recognise as something which, by Divine gift, has been made natural to man; the second it uniformly regards as something which can only be reached by man as the result of hard and strenuous struggle. This second order of immortality is what the Bible calls distinctively eternal life. It means by that phrase something different from mere duration, for it speaks of it as something which may be already possessed by man—"He that hath the Son *hath* eternal life." This second and higher immortality is, in truth, a thing identical with the indwelling of the Divine Spirit in the soul. It is not something which is to be *reached* by the indwelling of that Spirit; it is itself the life of the Spirit, and is reached in the first and faintest experience of that

life. The immortality which in the New Testament is designated eternal life, is, in the view of the New Testament, nothing less than the life of the Eternal, the personal presence of that primal force which lies at the basis of all things. The man who arrives at this possession is said to be immortal no longer by the mere gift of a Supreme Will who suffers him to live, but by the dwelling of the Divine nature within himself, making his immortality the very life of God—"Because I live, ye shall live also." And all this, be it remembered, is unopposed by any law of physical science, uncontradicted by any testimony of evolution. It is brought about by no leap or paroxysm; it involves no break in the evolutionary chain. It is effected by a power which is itself recognised as the main agent in the process of development—that primal force of the universe which is everywhere persistent and immortal.

CHAPTER XIV.

CONCLUSION.

WE have now brought to an end the subject of this inquiry. We have taken up one by one those points in which the modern doctrine of evolution has seemed to come into contact with the revelations of the old faith, and we have endeavoured impartially to consider whether the contact has been one of collision or one of union. As the result of our examination, we are now prepared to come to a definite conclusion. We have found that the old faith *can* live with the new. Without entering into the evidence for the doctrine of evolution, without considering to what extent its truth has been already established, or to what extent it still remains in abeyance, it must even now be abundantly evident that, should the doctrine of evolution be established, Christianity will not die. There are some who seem to regard it as now on its trial, awaiting the testimony of the witnesses for evolution, and indebted for its present con-

tinuance to the fact that the examination of these witnesses has not yet been concluded. It would, indeed, be more correct to say, that the fact of this examination not having been yet concluded is the only present hindrance to the continuance of Christianity. The moment that examination has been concluded, and the moment the verdict has been given on the one side or on the other, it is quite safe to say that there shall be an end of that religious unsettledness which has at present disorganised the old order of things. If the verdict be unfavourable to evolution, things will remain as they were; if the verdict be in favour of the new science, we have endeavoured to show that the new wine will fit the old bottles.

For, in truth, it is a fact which is testified by all experience, that the times of the greatest religious uncertainty have been the times of transition between the old and the new. The dangerous period to an old faith is its season of suspense—the period when it is assailed by what promises to be a destructive force, without having yet received the power to measure the extent of its destructiveness. Just as in the life of the individual the feeling of suspense tends to enervate the energies, so in the life of the community the necessity to suspend the judgment tends to weaken the force of religion. It is on this ground that we think the present the true period for an inquiry

into the relations of evolution and revelation. There are many who say it will be time enough to inquire into that relation when evolution itself is demonstrated to be the law of the universe. That will be far too late if men are now taught to believe that the proof of evolution would be the destruction of Christianity. With such a belief in their minds, the very possibility that the doctrine *may* be true is bound to exercise a weakening influence over the religious sentiments of the past. How is this weakening influence to be avoided? No amount of research would probably be sufficient to solve the question itself within the lifetime of the present generation, and it is with the lifetime of the present generation that we are here purely concerned. Is there any other method besides the actual solving of the question that could possibly set at rest the religious consciousness? There is one, and only one. If it can be shown that the application of the new force to Christianity would *not* be destructive—if it could be made clear to the minds of men that the establishment of the doctrine of evolution would have no necessary tendency to undermine the old faith,—the suspense of the religious world would be virtually at an end. Suspense there would still be, but it would no longer be religious suspense; it would be simply the waiting which we practise day by day in rela-

tion to the secular events of life, and which we are able to bear without religious injury, just from the conviction that the issue will not affect religion.

We have expressed our opinion that in the event of the doctrine of evolution becoming an established law of nature, Christianity will not die. We believe that it will have no difficulty whatever in adapting itself, should it be necessary, to such a view of nature as Mr Herbert Spencer proposes; and we have endeavoured in the preceding pages to show what are the grounds on which we hold this belief. There is yet one other aspect of the subject at which we desire to glance ere we close. If the doctrine of evolution should be proved to be the law of the universe, Christianity will occupy towards it a closer relationship than that of mere adaptation; it will itself take its place as one of the main forces in the achievement of the process. Now we wish to point out that if Christianity should come to be regarded as from the human and historical side one of the great evolutionary forces, it will thereby receive a scientific vindication of two most important claims which it has itself put forth.

The first of these claims put forth by Christianity is the claim to be regarded as an original law of the universe. Throughout the New Testament Epistles there is a constant reiteration of the statement that this religion, although a new

manifestation to the world, is not a new principle in nature. Paul speaks of it as "the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest." What is this but to say that the Christian principle existed in the universe before it existed in the heart of man? What is the reason that the New Testament writers lay such constant stress on the statement that the Christian manifestation was foreordained? It is clearly to indicate the fact that they regard it as an absolute law of the universe. They want to emphasise their persuasion that they do not look upon the new religion as new in any other sense than to man; that they do not consider it as a miracle in the sense of being a change in the counsels of God; that they do not recognise it as a leap, or break, or paroxysm in that universal order which God established before the foundation of the world. Now this claim of Christianity, so far from being refuted, would be scientifically vindicated by the establishment of the doctrine of evolution. Christianity would then be seen to have a place in the system of nature as necessary as the law of gravitation. It would no longer be possible to regard it as an accident in the history of the world; it would appear to be what it really is, an essential element in the history of the world. It would take its place, even from a purely historical standpoint, as one of the laws of nature which could not be eliminated from nature

without destroying the system of the universe itself. From a scientific point of view the same vision would be gained which was beheld by the apostle from a purely theological standpoint—the vision of a Christianity coexistent with the very being of God.

The second claim put forth by Christianity is the right to the empire of the world. It aspires to nothing less than an absolute dominion. It declares its mission to be nothing short of the subjugation of all things. And what is more remarkable still, it makes that claim at the very beginning of its career, at the time when its force seemed weak in comparison with the forces of the world. Christianity's prophecy of its own greatness first came to the ears of men as the wildest of paradoxes. It was not possible that it should have appeared in any other light than that of a paradox. That a force which had just begun to manifest itself in the world, whose physical resources were weak, and whose inherent bias was the reverse of aggressive, should yet confidently declare that it would ultimately prove the survivor over the long-established and powerful forces of the animal nature, was surely a fact which could excite nothing but marvel. If the men of that day had been acquainted with the doctrine of evolution, they would certainly have affirmed that the claim put forth by Christianity was at variance with that law of survival which had been established in the system of nature.

But a very different verdict would be given by the men of the nineteenth century if the doctrine of evolution were to be recognised as absolute law. So far from impugning the right of Christianity to universal dominion, the doctrine of evolution would vindicate and explain its right. Evolution may itself be regarded in one aspect as the history of the process of survival—the history of the process by which some are fit to live and some are bound to die. Now what is the history of this process as revealed by the facts of the world? The survival of the fittest in the sphere of evolution does not mean the survival of one and the same quality; on the contrary, the *fittest* is a relative term—that which is fit for life to-day may be unfit to-morrow. The history of evolution reveals that the things which were originally weak are the things which become ultimately the survivors in the strife. At first the physically strongest are the fittest for existence, and therefore to them exclusively does existence at first belong. Speaking generally, we may say that there have been three great acts in the evolutionary drama. The first is the period in which the physical element dominated over all beside—when the race was to the swift and the battle to the strong. The second is the period in which there appeared upon the field an antagonist to the physical element, and in which a doubtful warfare was waged between the spirit and the flesh.

The third is the period in which the battle begins to turn in favour of the spirit, and the power which originally had been the strongest is compelled to yield its empire. The first age was the history of the animal world, the second was the history of the struggle between the animal and the human, the third is the history of that process by which the human is gradually obtaining an empire over the animal. Perhaps it may be thought premature to have introduced such a third period at all. We may be asked, Where is the evidence for this new principle of survival? And indeed, if we look merely at the outward facts, it will be very difficult to prove that there has really been a reversal in the balance of power. There are times when it would almost seem as if the flesh had still the predominance over the spirit, and as if the survival of the fittest were still equivalent to the survival of the strongest. But the observation of outward fact is not here the true standard of measurement. If we would ask in what respect the third period differs from the second, we must seek the answer in a change of moral *ideal*. What distinguishes the third period from the second is a new standard of what constitutes the heroic. In the former age the great opponent of the spiritual element was not so much the animal life as the *admiration* for the animal life — the belief that the display of physical strength was the display of the highest

heroism. The latest age of evolution has reversed this judgment; and in reversing it, it has already potentially given the victory to the spirit. There has come into the world a new ideal of heroism,—an ideal which consists, not in self-aggrandisement, but in self-surrender for the sake of others; not in the abundance of the things a man possesses, but in the abundance of the things he can bestow. There is no man who does not in his heart believe that the life of sacrifice for the universal good is nobler than the life of struggle for individual gain, more like a hero, more worthy of a human soul. This state of mind is a transformation in the belief of the world, and it is a transformation which virtually amounts to the selection of a new order of being on which to bestow the gift of survival.

Now what has effected this transformation? There does not seem to be any natural road by which the admiration for mere physical strength could have developed into the admiration for a strength which is not physical, but sacrificial of the physical. Nor, in point of fact, from the record of merely secular history can we discover any place or time in which the transition began to be made. A spectator standing at the close of the second period would have declared with apparent justice that the physical forces were winning the battle; the strongest were never so near becoming the fittest as in the first century of Roman imperialism.

But if the same spectator had been permitted to fall asleep for a few centuries, and then to awake and take another survey of the world, he would certainly have found that the balance of victory had inclined to the other side, and had inclined in such a way as to render the ultimate result no longer doubtful. He would have found the change quite unaccountable from the standpoint of what is called purely secular history. He would only be able to recognise two facts—that when he had left the field the battle had been almost won by the forces called physical, and that now when he had returned he found the field. virtually in the possession of the spiritual powers of humanity. It would be clear to him, as it is clear to us, that between these two facts something must have intervened. We know what that something was; it was Christianity—that new principle of life which made all things new. But let us understand what this knowledge amounts to. It amounts to nothing less than this, that Christianity has vindicated the order of nature, has explained a fact in that order which without its presence would be inexplicable. It has shown us how it is that a transition has taken place between two opposite forms of culture, —how it is that what was once the survivor in the system of evolution has given place to the life of a contrary principle, and become subordinate to a power of which it was originally the inferior. And

just because Christianity has here furnished a scientific explanation of a fact of life which would be otherwise beyond science, its own position in the world has been itself scientifically vindicated. The establishment of the doctrine of evolution would not destroy its claim to empire, nor contradict its prophecy of dominion. The doctrine of evolution, if established as a universal law, would require to embrace Christianity as one of its main factors, and to recognise in it the most permanent force in the world. The only effect which the universal acceptance of evolution would produce upon the Christian claim to empire would be to rest upon a basis of science what has hitherto reposed only on a system of faith.

It cannot be denied, indeed, that if the evolutionary principle be true that measures the fitness of things for this world by their power of survival, Christianity is of all others best suited to the heart of man. Christianity has been the most surviving force that has ever been manifested in this world In one sense, indeed, all forces are surviving, but they do not keep their original forms: Christianity in this respect has been exceptional. It may seem to some as if the assertion were premature. We may be reminded that the Christian religion is not yet two thousand years old, and that there are systems both of faith and evolution which have far exceeded this term of duration. We may be

reminded, on the one hand, that the duration of that animal period in which the law of fitness coincided with the law of strength was so immense that it cannot be calculated by history; and on the other hand, that within the period of history itself the religions called Brahmanism, Buddhism, and Confucianism have far surpassed in longevity the number of years which Christianity has yet lived. All this is true, and yet none of these facts touches the question in hand. For the truth is, that Christianity itself has revealed to the world a new and a more infallible method of measuring that power of survival which resides in any creature or in any system. It has taught us that the most accurate mode of measurement is not that which estimates the strength of an object by the number of years it has endured, but that which computes its power of survival by the number and variety of the changes through which it has persisted. Measured by this standard, there can be no question as to whom the palm belongs. The duration of the principle of physical strength as the standard of survival extended, indeed, over an immense period, but it extended over the animal nature—that phase of life which exhibits the least tendency to variation. The religions of Brahmanism, Buddhism, and Confucianism can, indeed, point to a length of years which Christianity has not yet enjoyed; but these religions belong to the East—

that phase of human life which has been least liable to change. Christianity belongs not only to humanity, but to that region of humanity which, above all others, has exhibited the greatest tendency to progress and development. India and China have in themselves remained almost stagnant for centuries; what changes they have exhibited have been for the most part the result of foreign innovation. In such a sphere it is easy for any system which has been once established to stand. If the minds of men in any region of the world have seen reason to adopt any system of belief, and if in that region the minds of men are characteristically stagnant and impassive, there is no reason in the nature of things why the belief, once adopted, should not be for ever perpetuated. It is always more natural in this case that a system should survive than that it should perish: the fact of its perishing would prove inordinate weakness; but the fact of its survival does not prove inordinate strength. The duration of Brahmanism, Buddhism, and Confucianism is not the highest test of fitness for the world, because it is not the preservation of a changeless essence in opposition to changeful circumstances.

But when we come to Christianity, we find an entire reversal of the case. Christianity is the religion of the West; and to be changeless in the West is to afford an evidence of the persistence

of force which cannot be estimated by any mere terms of duration. The surviving strength of Christianity does not consist in the fact that it has existed in a region of the world for eighteen hundred years, but in the fact that during these eighteen hundred years the region where it has existed has been undergoing a constant series of changes. The persistence of Christianity in Western Europe has been analogous to the persistence of consciousness in the individual life. We have seen how in the individual life that mysterious force called the sense of identity has persisted, in spite of transmutations, throughout the whole environment of man's being. So has it been with the religion of Christ in the world. Again and again has its environment been wholly changed and replaced by something new, yet through all the vicissitudes of circumstances the essence of the religion has remained the same. It has experienced the most diverse, the most conflicting fortunes. It has passed through a stage of persecution; it has undergone a period of political subordination; it has itself occupied the throne of universal dominion; it has been successively in alliance and at variance with the scientific creeds of men; it has seen an entire system of astronomy swept away to make room for another and a contrary system: yet, amid all these changes, it has continued itself essentially unaltered. We say

essentially. Its intellectual form has indeed been modified in accordance with the needs of each respective age, but the intellectual form of Christianity is not its essence. Its essence is the belief in the power of the Cross—the belief in the survival of that which is the opposite of selfishness and the crucifier of the selfish man. In no age has this feature of Christianity failed to be recognised as its distinctive and abiding feature, and in the persistence of that recognition has consisted the permanence of the faith. It is on this ground that we must pronounce the religion of Christ the most persistent of all the forces which have been yet manifested to man; nor does there seem to be any reason in the nature of things why it should cease to persist in the future. One thing at least is clear, that this persistence will not be destroyed by the establishment of the doctrine of evolution, for the doctrine of evolution itself will add but another voice to these many testimonies which have vindicated for Christianity a place as the light and life of men.

THE END.

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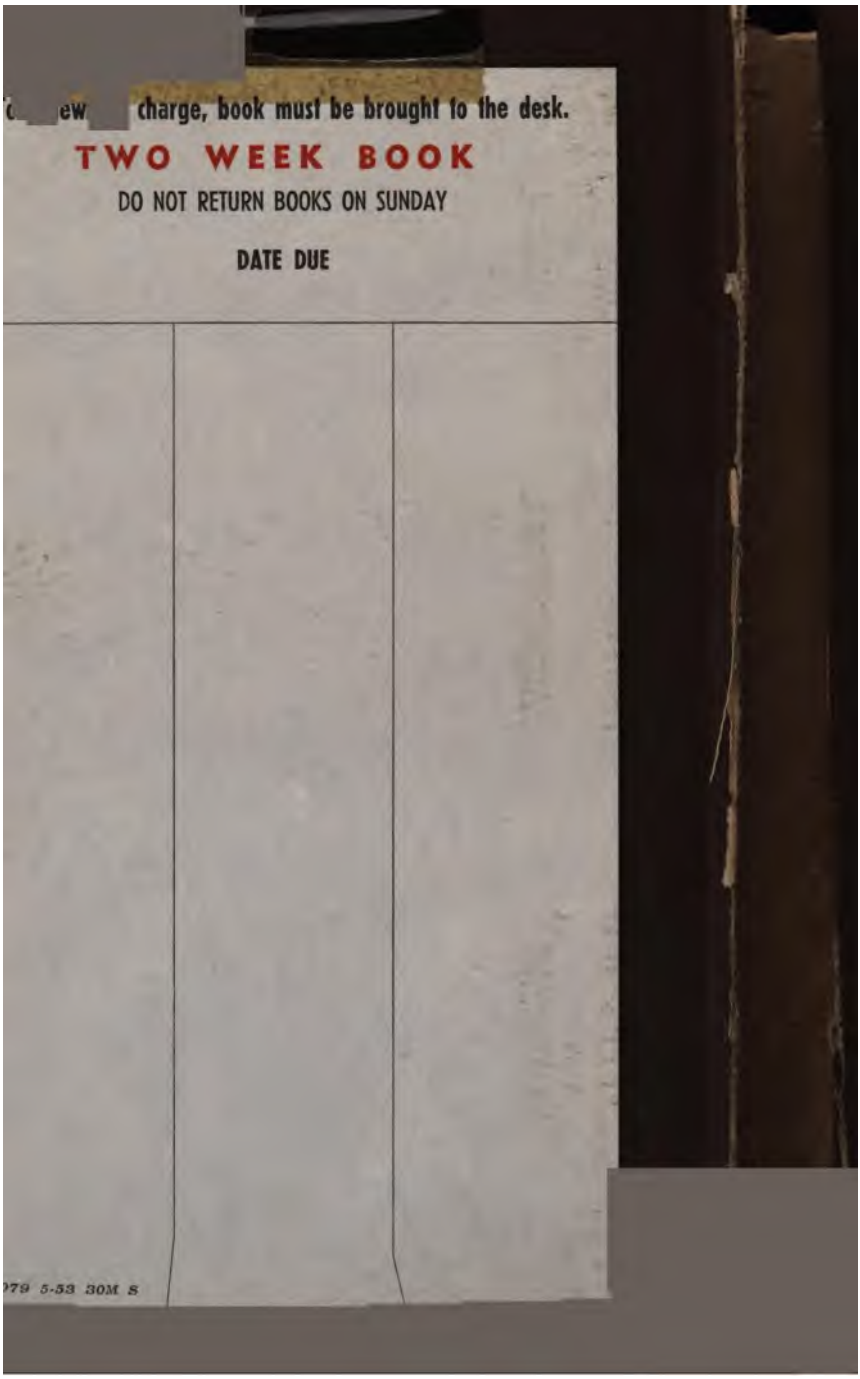
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